University of Alberta

The Body Habitus: Teenage Girls' Experiences of Hip Hop Dance

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my amazing mom and dad. I do not know which words could accurately convey my gratitude to you both for your unwavering support and love. I probably do not say it enough so, for the record, thank you for being so generous, supportive and loving, and an incredible pair of human beings! You are the reasons I have been able to pursue this goal and accomplish it. Thank you for providing me with every opportunity in life and your enduring confidence in me. I love you both very much.

Abstract

Physical activity is often positioned as a means for body beautification and/or control, and is generally less understood as a bodily experience. This thesis sought to examine how physical activity, specifically Hip Hop dance, can be a means to experience the moving body positively for teenage girls beyond its visual appearance. A feminist, qualitative approach was used to inquire into the multiple ways that teenage girls learned about and experienced their gendered bodies in their continuous search for identity. Taking up Bourdieu's (1990, 2001) notion of body habitus, the meanings and experiences of the adolescent female body were explored through participant observation and interview data in an eight-week Hip Hop program in southeast Edmonton. Findings from this research offers insight into the bodily experiences of Hip Hop as articulated by teen girls and ways that physical activity may be structured to promote positive bodily experiences.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Within the context of physical activity and active living, feminist researchers and social theorists have begun to unravel the various ways women experience their moving bodies. Some research suggests positive experiences in physical activity for women when developed by activity providers who strive to honour and develop the body (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; McDermott, 2000; Wright & Dewar, 1997). What remains inconclusive, however, is if younger females experience activity similar to women. To begin to understand the kinds of experiences girls have of physical activity and the bodily meanings they attribute to them, their experiences must first be heard. The purpose of this research is to hear the voices of adolescent girls speaking about their experiences in physical activity and to probe into the existence of a connection between their bodily experience and being active. From an understanding of these experiences, I will begin to fill a gap in the literature that exists in our conceptualization of young female bodies.

This research deals with the issue of adolescent female body experiences, so it is important to learn how girls understand the diversity of female bodies, yet feel bound to reproduce the cultural ideal. To be female in contemporary North American society means that there exists a perpetual potential that one will be gazed upon as a mere body. This body is constantly fearful of assault and violence and commonly resigns itself to an experience of the world that is more confined and restrained than male peers (Young, 1990). "The pursuit of bodily beauty encourages women to channel great quantities of energy and money into emulating a rigorous beauty standard" (Duncan, 1994, p. 85) that is in conformity with a strict feminine ideal. What many females see as individual aspirations for their bodies are really aspirations of conformity to a set of ideals that women themselves have little control in producing, regulating, or initiating. The dominance of the visual media, celebrity beauties as cultural heroes, and consumer culture all play a role in the conceptualization of the female body. We live in a culture that supposedly exalts individuality, but still positions only one (white, middle-class, Anglo-Saxon, able-bodied) female body as the ideal in dominant mass media.

The second chapter breaks the review of literature into two parts entitled: the female body and theoretical orientation. The first part of the literature review looks at the ways the female body has been conceptualized by various social and feminist theorists as a text, as a medium of culture. Important to this project is an understanding of how the body becomes seen as a representation of the self. The work of theorists including Bordo (1993b), Featherstone (1991) and Shilling (1993a) are used to analyse the notion of the female body as "project" which explains the cultural preoccupation with physical appearance. This idea explains how terms like health and beauty become culturally conflated based on the moral imperative to *look* healthy. This connection is explained by Featherstone (1991) in how "the prime purpose of the maintenance of the inner body becomes the enhancement of the appearance of the outer body" (p. 171).

Chapter Two continues its exploration by investigating how the desire to indulge is complicated by the value society bestows on the self-discipline and self-control of the body. Furthering an understanding of these ideas is the process of how the visual body is seen to represent a negotiation of these things by the individual. Foucault's (1979, 1984) "docile body thesis" and notion of "gaze" demonstrate how power is distributed through knowledge and can be inscribed on the body. As beliefs and attitudes about the body become normalized through these mechanisms, bodily ideals are reinforced as individuals internalize them as their own. Through the work of feminist theorists like Bartky (1990) and Markula (2001), Foucault's notions of self-surveillance and self-discipline are explored as they relate to the control over female body ideals.

This project is interested in the ways that adolescent girls perceive their bodies, particularly the sense they have of their active bodies. In the literature review how gender norms of femininity and masculinity can be limiting to the ways that girls and women are able to experience their bodies physically will be shown. Using Arnold (1979), Bartky (1990), Bordo (1993b), Wright & Dewar (1997) and Young (1990), how traditional conceptions of femininity and feminine body comportment become embodied and how they provide the way one experiences the world will be demonstrated.

To understand the bodily experiences of teen girls, I explore the literature about how adolescent girls construct meanings of their bodies. Girls' perceptions of school physical education and other forms of physical activity is examined as it connects to their experience of their active bodies. Research from Oliver (1999, 2001), Oliver & Lalik (2001) and Olafson (2002) explore the ways that girls' bodies are treated in school physical education curriculums and how this affects their attitudes about participating in physical activity and their perceptions of their bodies.

The theoretical orientation I have chosen as the framework for this project is described in the second section of the literature review. I have chosen to use the work of Bourdieu (1978, 1984, 1985, 1990a, 1990b, 2001), specifically his idea of body habitus as the basis for my investigation into the bodily experiences of teen girls. This choice was made because of the incomplete, eternally evolving, and "plastic" nature of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990b) and the compelling similarity to the incomplete, eternally evolving, and "plastic" nature of the dispositions of adolescent girls. I also felt that the habitus was a more complete theoretical depiction of "bodily experience" than an investigation of "body image" or "body concept" as it includes "all the dispositions one has to the body as a function of our material existence" (Laberge & Sankoff, 1988, p. 271). This enables me to explore the body from a sociological perspective as a tangible entity that acquires value in multiple ways.

The habitus is acquired as a bodily orientation and is predominantly configured by the specific social structures individuals encounter through their upbringing (Hoy, 1999). The regularities in an individual's world form the habitus, which in turn forms the "basis of the schemes of perceptions and appreciation through which [all subsequent experiences] are apprehended" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 443). As Bourdieu believes that social class is the defining material factor of the habitus, the reasons for this are articulated as they relate to this project. Social class is then discussed in the ways that it can represent itself on the body as physical capital. The notion of physical capital as described by Shilling (1993b) "refers to the development of bodies in ways which are recognized as possessing value in social fields" (p. 127). This explanation allows this project to link social class in practical ways to an investigation of cultural conceptions of the ideal female body as they are disseminated through our society.

The literature review concludes with a discussion regarding the compatibility of a feminist understanding of gender and agency and Bourdieu's (1990a, 2001) theory of body habitus. Here I show how Bourdieu's historical approach to gender as a secondary *social* influence has been advanced to a primary *symbolic* influence in his most recent publication in Bourdieu (2001). In response to a major criticism of Bourdieu's theory of habitus, this section will defend his notion as not purely reproductive, but as an opportunity for individual transformation.

Chapter Three provides an explanation of my choice to use a feminist and sociological perspective. Rejecting the traditional academic model and refusing to accept some of the dichotomies that exist allows me to account for my own subjectivities in this research. My intention is to accomplish this research using reflexivity as described by Schwandt (2001) and Stanley (1990), and to account for my own experiences as a (once) adolescent female and now as a researcher.

The majority of Chapter Three is spent detailing the qualitative methods I used to collect, describe, analyse and interpret my data. This section discusses the rationale behind the methods I chose and the step by step procedures I carried out as supported by the literature. This section describes the ways in which I developed rapport with the girls, collected my field notes through observation and how I conducted the participant interviews. I then account for the descriptive tactics I used to transcribe the data and how I performed the analysis through coding procedures. Finally, I speak to the ways I represented the data to complete the process of interpretation. As a gesture to the feminist epistemological position I used to produce this knowledge, I included a section on my biases and how they have enabled and constrained this research.

Chapter Four begins with a full description of the Hip Hop program that was used as a research site for this project. The leader of the program and the four girls that became the participants for this project are then introduced through a series of vignettes. I chose to introduce them in this way to give the reader a sense of their personal characteristics and the ways they appeared to me through my interactions with them. In this way I also want the girls to contribute to the telling of their experiences. This chapter is the reader's first glimpse of the data and the form it took as it is represented along the major thematic pathways that emerged from it. As each theme is introduced I discuss some of the limitations to the research that have become evident through my own bias, self-reflection and from the literature. The main points within each theme are supported by specific examples taken directly from the transcripts. Through the process of analysing the data I connect my findings back to the literature.

I proposed that an analysis of the bodily experiences of teen girls is amiable with Bourdieu's (1990a) notion of habitus. In the fifth chapter of this thesis I will discuss if this was successful and through what mechanisms. As each theme is explored, the specific contributions of this research to the areas of study and literature will be explored. The implications this project has to our knowledge of teen girls' bodily experiences will be teased out and recommendations (both theoretical and practical) will be made. Finally, Chapter Six will include conclusions drawn from this project and offer some direction for continued research in this area.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Section I: The Female Body

Different theorists have conceptualized the body in various ways, and for social and cultural theorists, the body is seen as a text, a medium of culture. It is "the surface on which the central rules and hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body" (Bordo, 1993b, p. 165). Through a feminist investigation of how the female body has been constructed in western society, I want to explore how the effects of bodily norms for girls and women may limit their ability to experience their physicalities fully (Young, 1990). I am concerned with the female preoccupation to achieve a beautiful, stylized body, as well as the repercussions that are associated with the failure of attaining such a body. Females are constantly receiving messages that urge them to look and behave in certain (ideal) ways, at which time they will be considered appropriately feminine, healthy, beautiful, self-controlling, and worthy of being female. Realizing that females of different racial, religious, ethnic, class, and ability backgrounds may interpret societal messages in different ways due to these influences, the same societal images may be understood to mean different things. To investigate how these homogenous ideals are normalized, internalized, and/or resisted among diverse females will help us understand how they influence the process through which girls construct meanings of their bodies.

In this review I first look at the body as a representation of the self, and Shilling's (1993b) notion of the body as project. Second, I investigate the cultural conflation between health and beauty, and consumer culture's mixed messages of desire and control. Third, I discuss Foucault's (1979) "docile body" thesis, and the process of "internalization" because of its strong link to identity. Following this will be a general analysis of how the norms of femininity play out on the body, and how they factor in female oppression. Finally, as not to make assumptions that adolescent girls experience their bodies in the same ways as women, I will discuss their specific bodily experiences as documented in the literature.

The Body as Self

In today's society, the female body is conceptualized in a very limited way despite the reality of the variety of bodies of different size, shape, and comportment. In late modernity, the body is seen as the ultimate expression of the self (Featherstone, 1991). People generally attribute certain characteristics to an individual based on his or her body before ever knowing anything about their personality or character, and this rings true even more so for women (Herndon, 2003). We "hold a new belief, that appearance and bodily presentations express the self" (Featherstone, 1991, p. 189). The body, although seen as a reflection of individuality, is really more a reflection of culturally important discourses (Bartky, 1990). Due to these societal pressures, the body is seen as a project, an endless and continual, inescapable form of work that many women undertake to achieve the true expression of her self (Bordo, 1998; Shilling, 1993a).

Shilling's (1993a) notion of the "body as project" articulates the increasingly close relationship between the body and identity.

> Investing in the body provides people with a means of self-expression and a way of potentially feeling good and increasing the control they have over their bodies. If one feels unable to exert influence over an increasingly complex society, at

> least one can have some effect on the size, shape and appearance of one's body. (p. 7)

In a world with many uncertainties, many women learn to associate control over their lives with control over their bodies (Bordo, 1993a).

Cultural Conflation

When people talk about getting healthy or being physically fit, are they talking about decreasing their blood pressure and cholesterol, increasing their lean muscle mass and aerobic capacity (material concerns), or are they talking about managing the appearance of their body to fit better with North America's societal ideals (symbolic concerns)? From the work of Crawford (1980), Duncan (1994) and Featherstone (1991), there seems to be a general societal inability to separate the meanings of health and beauty from each other. In the case of the former, there also seems to be an inability to pursue real biological and social determinants of health (i.e., cholesterol levels, blood pressure measures, class etc.) without ultimately longing for an enhancement in the appearance of the body. Another source for this confusion is represented in the belief that "fat is unhealthy" (Duncan, 1994, p. 88) and that health can be appraised by one's appearance. The conflation of the terms health and beauty occur through many discourses including those of medicine, media, education and health promotion. The material concerns of the body have assumed an important symbolic place in the minds of many North Americans, and as such have made the individual responsibilities of maintaining one's health measurable against social (rather than medical) standards.

Although health is consistently promoted as the link to feeling good, it is almost always tied to looking good, which is not without contradictions: "Whereas health may be a private condition that varies from individual to individual, beauty is a social, public standard that admits few variants in our culture" (Duncan, 1994, p. 87). Drawing on Crawford (1980), White, Young, & Gillett (1995) argue that systems of beliefs around self-responsibility reflects society's moralization of health, and as such see involvement in health-promoting activities as the moral obligation of the individual. Through many cultural mechanisms, those who look good are made to feel good, and the outward display of youth and beauty become a primary goal. This becomes obvious as an individual's involvement in activities (with health as a goal) provides an external sign to others that the promotion of health has been accounted for (White, Young, & Gillett, 1995). These activities establish themselves as virtuous pastimes because of the potential lifestyle rewards resulting from an enhanced appearance (Featherstone, 1991). Due to the confusion between what is meant by health and beauty, it becomes clear that "the prime purpose of the maintenance of the inner body becomes the enhancement of the appearance of the outer body" (Featherstone, 1991, p. 171).

In North American consumer culture, the financial ability of many to consume goods is contradicted by the desire to indulge. Many live in a society that produces a continual cultural impulse to consume, and are told that doing so will bring them happiness. Notions of the "good-life" are produced by this indulgence; Thus, individuals are often confronted by this dilemma in many parts of their lives, one of which is the pursuit of health.

> Discipline and hedonism are no longer seen as incompatible, indeed the subjugation of the body through body maintenance routines is presented within consumer culture as a precondition for the achievement of an acceptable appearance and the release of the body's expressive capacity. (Featherstone, 1991, p. 171)

Society's tendency to dissociate the body from the mind, through the workings of Decartes' mind/body dichotomy, encourages many women to believe that the mind can control the body, and in so doing is a reflection of a person's ability to balance impulse and desire (Bordo, 1993b, 1998). Bordo's (1998) notion of the "bulimic personality" in late modernity embodies contradictory images of both self-discipline and indulgence. Beautiful bodies are seen to belong to someone who has been able to negotiate the commodities of the beauty industry successfully, but more importantly as belonging to someone with self-control, a highly culturally valued personal characteristic.

Foucault

Feminists have taken up a variety of theories with respect to the body and its various representations. Although I am not building the theoretical orientation of this project from a Foucauldian perspective, I am including a short discussion of Foucault's (1979) "docile body" theory as it informs many of the important feminist theorists I have reviewed. I also find his theory particularly helpful when investigating bodily ideals and norms.

Foucault's (1979) "docile body" thesis points to the importance of the normal, and how the disciplines that produce the normal are taken as the most valuable. Docile bodies result from "a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour" (Foucault, 1979, p. 138 cited in Bartky, 1990, p. 63). In modern society, a visible central authority immediately regulates less of daily life, and so societal disciplines seek to regulate the body's "forces and operations, economy and efficiency of its movements" (Bartky, 1990, p. 63). On the model of Foucault's metonym of the panopticon in society, individuals relentlessly survey themselves and a feeling of conscious and permanent visibility, or "gaze," maintains a heightened self-consciousness for individuals, especially women (Bartky, 1990). Foucault's notion of the gaze has replaced a conventional authority as the new means of control through which conforming subjects, or docile bodies, are produced. Due to a de-centralized authority that is nowhere and everywhere, it is people themselves who monitor their movements and become their own disciplinarians (Foucault, 1984).

Bodies become disciplined through cultural mechanisms that "internalize" society's norms about bodies into aspects of an individual's sense of identity (Bartky, 1990). When girls and women begin to see the "ideal" bodies depicted in magazines and on billboards as their *own* ideals, their freedom to construct their own meanings for their bodies is lost. If their bodies are not in close compliance with their *own* ideals, women learn to deal with this as a personal failure (Markula, 2001). Statements like "it is normal in our society to have a negative body image, not necessarily healthy, but normal" (Markula, 2001, p. 162) reinforce just how intrinsic these beliefs have become to many females. Notions of body hatred *as* normal serve to illustrate the influence that the fitness, fashion, and beauty industries as well as the media that represent them (e.g., popular magazines) have on female bodies.

I have included this brief analysis of Foucault (1979, 1984) to demonstrate how some feminists have used his notions of how power is distributed to "provide knowledge about how women should understand, regulate, and experience their bodies" (Markula, 2001, p. 169). The recent expansion of scientific knowledge (about things like nutrition, and exercise) has resulted in a more detailed and stricter categorization of normalizing body practices. According to Foucault, these specific practices are the ways that power comes to be inscribed on the body (cited in Markula, 2001). As a result, many girls and women find themselves observing and measuring themselves against established norms that define healthy behaviour, but do not account for individual differences. It is worth noting again that because cultural conceptions of health and beauty have become so conflated, many women are unable to discern between health and beauty practices or see their own involvement in reproducing societal ideals.

Femininity

The ideal female body physically represents certain "feminine" characteristics (Bartky, 1990, p. 69-71). These include a small stature with slight muscularity, appropriate amounts of breast and buttocks, contemporary styles of hair and clothing, and a comportment that allows limited confidence, assertiveness and occupation of space (Young, 1990). As Bartky (1990) details the disciplines that women are expected to enact affect women in many different ways through their bodies. Disciplinary practices that govern appetites with diets, mold bodies with exercise, and pursue youth with complex beauty regimens produce docile female bodies. Not only are girls and women strongly encouraged to maintain or achieve a body of particular size and shape, but there is also a specific repertoire of gestures, movements and postures they are to adapt.

Bartky (1990) suggests feminine comportment must exhibit constriction, grace, and a modest eroticism, which confine women to a smaller space than men. I contend that these limitations not only hold females back from engaging in and enjoying physical activity, but also contribute to their general oppression. As Arnold (1979) argues, "one's body is one's access to the world, one's way of experiencing the world" (p. 4). Agreeing with Arnold, I then argue that it is important that girls and women be given alternative ways, which are not illustrative of conventional femininity, of physically expressing themselves as females. A reconstituted notion of femininity that embodies a sense of power and not one of oppression is also worthwhile. It follows that "how we move is intimately linked to relations of power both in terms of other people/subjects and our environment" (Wright & Dewer, 1997, p. 82). All this points to the importance of identifying the body *as* the self.

In North America, the dominant feminine standard is of white, middle-class women (hooks, 1998; Kaw, 1998). Feminine beauty "more than character and intelligence, often signifies social and economic success…in U.S. society" (Kaw, 1998, p. 172). According to hooks (1994; 1998) and Kaw (1998), Black and Asian-American women are judged against a standard of white beauty and femininity that is not easily reproduced on non-white bodies. Due to cultural distortions in the representations of beauty and femininity, Asian, Native-American, Latina, Indian, and Black women are denied access to a variety of representations of female beauty that accurately reflect their mirror images (Gillespie, 1998). In this way dominant images of beauty illustrate how white femininity is more highly valued than all others.

Disguised as a creative and enjoyable feminine practice, the ornamentation of the female body is to follow strict cultural regulations. Advertised as creative tools used to separate individual women according to personal preference, make-up, hairstyles and clothing are also regimented in ways where only certain versions of this "individuality" is celebrated. This is, of course, a gendered activity as men are not required to undertake the same amount of preparation, suggesting that women's bodies are in need of greater manipulation to measure up (Bartky, 1990). Although men are under more pressure today than they once were to look a certain way, it could be argued that women are still expected to maintain a much more rigorous daily routine.

Teen Girls

While increasingly the bodily experiences of adult women have been investigated (Arnold, 1994; Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; Markula, 2001; McDermott, 2000; Roberts, 1981; Wright & Dewar, 1997), there exists a lack of research on adolescent girls' experiences of their bodies that does not center on issues of eating disorders. Furthermore, there is little research on adolescent girls in reference to the potential relevance of kinesthetic pleasures they may experience from physical movement, how this may factor into their physical activity involvement, and the potential effects they may produce regarding girls' perspectives of their bodies. Some research has shown that women have overcome negative histories with their bodies once exposed to physical activity in ways that promote the enjoyment of it with the purpose of honouring the body

(Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; McDermott, 2000; Wright & Dewar, 1997). Suggestively, these insights may hold considerable relevance for adolescents as a means for developing a positive relationship with their bodies from a young age.

In this section I explore what the literature says about how adolescent girls construct meanings of their bodies in general, and more specifically their moving bodies, and the relevance of the aforementioned research regarding women with respect to adolescent girls. Second, I investigate the relationship between teen girls' perceptions of physical activity and school physical education (PE) curricula. Specifically, I examine the relationship between their experiences of PE activities and their bodies, as well as the connection between teen girls' perceptions of PE and their participation in other physical activities. These relationships are relevant to this project as PE is a required experience for young girls and something in which some do not choose to participate. This study focuses on the needs and experiences of less active girls and notes that for this group school PE could be one of a limited range of activity experiences. Third, I note the recommendations in the literature to make PE curricula more hospitable to teen girls as places for them to experience their bodies positively.

Adolescence is a time when girls' bodies are changing in obvious ways due to hormonal changes caused by the onset of puberty: "It is at the time girls experience these bodily changes and become softer and rounder that their culture tells them thin is beautiful, even imperative" (Oliver, 1999, p. 221). Accompanying the physical changes of adolescence is also the desire to understand who one is and where one fits into society in general (Muuss, 1996; Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995). As the female body has become objectified, it is no surprise that the body represents a means of acceptance for adolescent girls and "is at the heart of their crisis in confidence" (Oliver, 1999, p.223).

Oliver (1999; 2001) and Oliver & Lalik (2001) investigate how adolescent girls construct personal images of their bodies. These studies include findings from interview, journal, and storytelling data collected in a school setting (over a 15-week period) during the girls' normal PE class time. The four girls interviewed were between the ages of 13-14, and of various racial backgrounds including African-American, Caucasian, and Indian. Within their findings, evidence that adolescent girls construct images and ideals for themselves from the normalized images directed at women is repeatedly given. The girls in the studies reproduce idealized images for themselves from popular culture's portrayal of the female body in magazines, movies, music, television and billboards. Among the girls interviewed, looking "right" and "normal" was extremely important, that is looking like the women portrayed by mainstream popular culture as beautiful. Within the school setting of the girls she interviewed, Oliver (1999, 2001) notes that power is held through visual and verbal representations of the self, and that not looking a certain way can eliminate girls from gaining access to social power. Society's focus on "body image," and how deeply teen girls' internalize these images, show us that "the body is no longer seen as subjectively experienced but rather as an object" (Oliver, 1999, p. 222).

There are a number of social factors that strictly limit how girls can experience their bodies: "The more the girls try to fit this normalized image, the more they have to internalize the multiple forms of racism, sexism, and classism, that are operating to perpetuate this dominant discourse" (Oliver, 1999, p. 237). I do not speak extensively to issues that divide adolescent girls along the lines of race, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, and ability. This does not mean, however, that I believe gender (or race, sexuality, ethnicity, religion) to be a completely unifying category. Due to the diverse pressures arising from a girl's particular background and socialization, the unifying influence of gender will be fractured along these lines. Every girl will have a unique life experience and be influenced by different pressures to a greater or lesser extent. I may also suggest that regardless of which pressures individual girls are subject to, normalizing influences are at work, encouraging girls to conform in accordance to specific (yet potentially different) ideals.

A key issue facing adolescent girls is the set of expectations that their peer group has about how they are to look and behave. As Currie (1999) suggests: "The power of peers to affix labels that determine social acceptability means that girls are subject to continual assessment by their peers" (p. 244). These same mechanisms of socialization to conform to ideal standards is also present in PE classes, as a place where many girls feel under intense scrutiny by both their peers and teachers, according to Olafson (2002). Due to peer (and PE teacher) expectations that require girls to be able to perform physical activities in certain ways, not participating in PE activities allows some girls to escape from the judgmental gaze of others (Olafson, 2002).

Some research (Currie, 1999; Ennis, 1995; Kirk & Claxton, 2000; Olafson, 2002; Williams, Bedward, & Woodhouse, 2000; Wright, 1996) indicates that there is a strong relationship between girls' experiences in school PE and their perceptions of physical activity in general. Suggestively, this holds considerable relevance for the bodily knowledge of those girls whose active experiences are limited to school PE classes or are limited because of PE classes. If PE is important to how girls experience their bodies, how PE curricula are structured and taught is important to how girls experience physical activity.

Williams, Bedward, and Woodhouse (2000) explore the experiences of adolescent girls within school PE curriculum, highlighting how masculine and feminine subcultures in schools "produce gender specific relationships between physical activity, physical education or sport and young men and women's self-image" (p. 5). Critical to how adolescent girls experience PE is the structure of many current curricula which are largely based on a white, male, Western European model promoting skills and sport activity where male-defined standards of power and strength predominate (Olafson, 2002). Through curricula that emphasize multiactivity skills and sports activities, Olafson (2002) found that girls' bodies were often defined as being "weak, clumsy, and inept" (p. 69).

While the body (as an object to be controlled and manipulated) is the focus of study in PE curricula, the outward appearance of the body dominates the discourse. Furthermore, the concept of health is often presented as a relationship between fitness and fatness – where health is equated with the apparent lack of fat (Tinning, 1985). This perspective normalizes the notion that "being fat is not only unhealthy, but it is wrong" (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, p. 304) within the PE environment and reproduces the doctrine of keeping in shape and its association with moral achievement. As Oliver & Lalik (2001) explain: "Health is generally depicted using images of the body that are unrealistic for many girls…who exert time and effort trying to fit into an imagined body structurally inconsistent with their lived forms" (p. 304). In these ways, many of the normalizing tendencies of the health and beauty industries become influential to how girls experience their active bodies in PE, and these tendencies do not appear to be positive.

The context within which activities take place is very important to how teen girls experience PE. Issues like co-educational vs. single-sex learning environments, uniform and showering requirements, as well as skill level are major determining factors in teen girls enjoyment and participation levels (Williams, Bedward, and Woodhouse, 2000). Williams, Bedward, and Woodhouse (2000) found, in schools that strictly enforce uniform and showering protocols, many girls stated that the experience was "traumatic and humiliating to such an extent that several admitted avoiding participating in PE lessons because of their dread of showering" (p. 14) and discomfort in the PE uniform. The authors conclude that the need for girls to be able to exercise control over their dress and other related things is important if they are to benefit from the activities available to them. Reflecting on my own experiences, this is important, as feeling uncomfortable or self-conscious can distract from fully experiencing the moving body and thus the activity being attempted. I can clearly remember being more comfortable in clothing I had chosen rather than school issued uniforms.

Confirming how PE becomes gendered within school and social cultures, as noted in Williams, Bedward, and Woodhouse's (2000) research, adolescent females are limited to certain ways of expressing themselves in the PE context. Olafson (2002) notes that according to some of the girls to whom she spoke, it seemed to them that only "popular girls" were able to participate in physical activity and still look good. According to Currie (1999), participation in physical activity is strongly connected to looking good and being popular for adolescent girls. Many girls saw themselves as unattractive (sweaty and redfaced) during PE which made them feel uncomfortable. Olafson (2002) agrees adding that some of the girls did not like how their bodies looked while performing certain activities and would avoid these activities to spare themselves the embarrassment. As Bartky (1990) has also argued, identity cannot be removed from the appearance of bodies, and so for adolescent girls "less-than-perfect bodies impact sense of self" (Olafson, 2002, p. 70) which is also true while being active. One can conclude, based on these findings, that negative bodily experiences in PE settings impact adolescent girls' sense of their bodies both in and out of the activity context. If girls' PE experiences are negative and PE is one of the very few experiences they have of physical activity, girls may be more reluctant to engage in other types of activity. Olafson (2002) also states that girls who like physical activity do not necessarily like PE. It seems that although bad experiences in PE may not cause girls to discount physical activity altogether, making the experience positive remains important if it serves as their only regular exposure to physical activity.

Oliver & Lalik (2001) wonder "where in girls' school experiences they are having healthy opportunities to examine their experiences of their bodies" (p. 305)? If school PE curricula demonstrate physical activity as dependant on skill and strength by bodies that conform to rigorous standards of beauty, it is not surprising that adolescent females feel alienated by PE curriculum. Oliver's (2001) comments are relevant here: "If physical educators could better understand some of the aspects of physical culture that influence how girls think and feel about their bodies maybe we could find more responsive ways of creating curriculum that takes into consideration girls' experiences of their bodies" (p. 149).

According to Kirk and Claxton (2000) and Olafson (2002), students should be involved in innovations to PE curricula in order for them to be effective. These authors also advocate PE in creative, safe and caring atmospheres that recognize individual interests as a central factor. PE curricula should include a range of activities that focus on learning skills necessary to engage in active, healthy, lifestyles that can be maintained over time.

According to Oliver (1999), it is the responsibility of educators and researchers to help disrupt the unhealthy storylines adolescent girls are constructing for themselves. If the goals of educators and researchers are to develop teen girls into healthy women they "need to help them learn to critique images of the body within popular culture" (Oliver, 2001). The ways in which girls learn to see their bodies will make a lifelong difference in how they treat their bodies and lead their lives. Physical educators are therefore in the business of helping adolescent girls create a wider view of what healthy women look like, who they are and what they can become (Sparkes, 1997). It may be important then to include information on how to critique popular images of the body to unveil their hidden messages within the PE curriculum. In general, critical thinking is what needs to be developed in young women's minds to teach them that "information is laced with values, and that just because something is presented as 'fact' does not mean that they should take this information as the 'truth' and not question its validity" (Oliver, 2001, p. 152). Allowing girls a place to think for themselves and a voice to speak for themselves could be an empowering part of PE.

It is important to this research to explore why adolescent girls are such a popular target group and under such intense scrutiny from the research, medical and health communities. Without formally investigating the causes for this, I can gesture to what I believe to be some relevant issues. The preoccupation with health and wellness, increasing statistics regarding childhood obesity and the explosion of self-help culture may be contributing influences. The prevalence of the portrayal of the ideal body within popular culture and the increasing belief that the body can be changed to achieve the ideal (e.g., through plastic surgery) may also be important. How marketers specifically target teen girls, because of the economic capital they have access to, increases the significance of this research as I try to understand the experiences of this group. For those of us whose goal it is to help adolescent girls develop strategies for resistance to contemporary popular bodily ideals, we must first understand why they need this help and the sources for their confusion. To be sensitive to diverse class, race, ability, ethnic and religious backgrounds is to avoid essentializing all adolescent females as having the same experiences or being susceptible to the same pressures. This research will aim to be cognisant of these subtleties and respectful of them in practice.

Section II: Theoretical Orientation

The previous review touched on a variety of feminist and social theorists whose work has been pivotal to my understanding of the female body. While many theorists have informed my understanding of females' bodily experiences, I have chosen to use the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1990b), specifically his idea of body habitus as the theoretical orientation for this project. My original interest in Bourdieu's habitus developed because of the incomplete, eternally evolving, and "plastic" nature of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; 1990b; and Hoy, 1999) and the compelling similarity to the incomplete, eternally evolving, and "plastic" nature of the dispositions of adolescent girls. As habitus includes "all the dispositions one has to the body as a function of our material existence" (Laberge & Sankoff, 1988, p. 271), it seems to be a more complete depiction of bodily experience than "body image" or "body concept." The concept of habitus complements the age group I am studying, because adolescent girls have only begun to piece together their identities and may be inclined to incorporate new bodily experiences. Perhaps teen girls, in the search for self, can still be influenced to adopt practices that enable them to experience the female body positively through participation in alternative physical activity prior to physical and mental maturity.

To begin, I will define what is meant by "habitus" and what an understanding of it can bring to the study of the female body. Second, I will discuss the importance of class in the formation of the habitus as its defining feature. I will also gesture to the influence that class and culture have on an individual's leisure and recreation beliefs and thus their relative importance to individuals. Third, I explore Bourdieu's (1990a) notion of physical capital and how bodies are accorded value through image alone. As it is critical to feminist research to consider gender as all-pervasive, I will take a critical glance at habitus and Bourdieu's sociology to make sure it is compatible with a feminist perspective. Finally, in response to the criticism leveled against Bourdieu that habitus is deterministic, I discuss how agency is possible in the complex ways feminists know it.

Habitus

Bourdieu (1990b) was looking for a way to explain how enduring social 'things' were expressed spontaneously in practical life, and how the practices of everyday life were responsible for such things. Through his investigation, the concept of habitus emerged.

> The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 442)

Bourdieu sees comportment as predominantly configured by the social structures and bodily orientation (or "hexis") that individuals acquire through their upbringing in a particular culture or class. "Bodily hexis, says Bourdieu…is political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, [original emphasis] turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking" (Hoy, 1999, p. 7).

The regularities of the world in which the habitus is formed tend to appear as necessary and natural as "they are the basis of the schemes of perception and appreciation through which they are apprehended" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 443). In other words, the very things (conditions, norms) that produce the structures of the habitus are like the lenses of glasses through which all subsequent experiences are seen. Humans are products of a particular class of regularities, and it is the habitus that generates all the 'reasonable' or 'common sense' behaviours that are possible within the limits of these regularities. Humans choose actions that are likely to be positively sanctioned and are privy to this knowledge based on their relationship with the structures and characteristics of their own experience. At the same time, "without violence, art, or argument," individuals tend to exclude behaviours that would be negatively sanctioned because of their incompatibility with these conditions (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 445). With this theory in mind, it is easy to understand how the illusion of chosen or properly creative action is conceived (Laberge, 1995).

The social structures that organize how social practices are performed typically reward traditional practices and thus renew and reproduce themselves. In this way, the social structures responsible for organizing how some accept a limited variety of acceptable female bodies dictate the extreme practices that females will engage with to achieve a body within the limits. Although there is an amazing variety of sizes, shapes, dispositions and ways of expressing the self with the body amongst females, only a certain few are regarded as "natural" and are thus the only ones heralded by society as ideal and worthy of adulation.

Class

Bourdieu (1990a) believes that above all other influences, class is the defining (material) factor of the habitus. In modernity, different classes and class fractions develop distinctive orientations to the body, which allow the creation of various bodily orientations. For Bourdieu, the body is an unfinished entity, and thus as it develops, it bears an imprint of an individual's social class (Bourdieu, 1990a). Class habitus refers to the systematic variation in attitudes, perceptions and appreciations among the various social classes. It is "a generating principle of tastes, likes, and dislikes which determines choice in the form of consumer practices which constitute a lifestyle" (Laberge &

Sankoff, 1988, p. 268). The reasons that a particular group adopts a certain style of the body (i.e. dress, demeanor) are connected to the distribution and meanings given to alternative styles of dress or diet, the orientation to the body a style of dress or diet encourages, and the relationship between the fields of fashion and diet with other social fields (Shilling, 1993b). All of these are shaped by class.

The class habitus also has a strong relationship to working conditions and leisure beliefs. How the body is carried, groomed, nourished and cared for can often reveal social class. These principles can help explain the origin of physical activity practices and the class differences that accompany them (Laberge & Sankoff, 1988).

> The interest the different classes have in self-presentation, the attention they devote to it, their awareness of the profits it gives and the investment of time, effort, sacrifice and care which they actually put into it are proportionate to the chances of material or symbolic profit they can reasonably expect from it. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 190)

Feminists and social theorists make note of the influence class has on how the body is displayed though they put a different emphasis on its effect as compared to Bourdieu. In general, consumer driven culture encourages spending as much as one can to achieve the expected result, at which point one will be healthy and *happy* (Duncan, 1994). With the mass production of goods and the falling prices that accompany them, the working and lower classes are led to believe that they can finally "participate in the consumption of commodities and experiences once restricted to the upper classes" (Featherstone, 1991, p. 172). Bartky (1990) argues that "the larger disciplines that construct a "feminine" body out of a female one are by no means race- or class-specific"

(p. 72). By this she means that regardless of where women purchase beauty products (at high priced department stores or in bargain bins) or exercise (at an elite club or at home) they are still trying to achieve the same general result. Another belief that brings females together is what Duncan (1994) calls the "efficacy initiative: This discourse implies that all one needs to do to get healthy, lose weight, sculpt muscles, and become beautiful is to make a private commitment to a new regime. The then hoped-for results will automatically ensue" (p. 87).

In response to these theorists, Bourdieu (1978) would argue that although it is likely for all females to experience pressure to conform to standards of feminine beauty, females of differing classes experience this pressure in different ways.

> On one side, there is the *instrumental* relation to the body which the working classes express in all the practices centered on the body, whether in dieting or beauty care…which is also manifested in the choice of sports…On the other side, there is the tendency of the privileged classes to treat the body as an *end in itself*, with variants according to whether the emphasis is placed on the intrinsic functioning of the body as an organism which leads to…the body for others. (cited in Laberge & Sankoff, 1988, p. 270-271, original emphasis)

Although these assertions seem to work within a class analysis, at the intersection of beauty, class, and race these same generalizations may not hold. According to hooks (1994), within the black community the hierarchy of beauty is primarily based on the darkness of black skin, where lighter skin correlates more positively to success: "In high schools around the United States, darker skinned black girls must resist the socialization that would have them see themselves as ugly if they are to construct healthy self-esteem"

(p. 180). Although beauty standards are practiced by different classes in various ways, racial differences can impress different and segregated standards upon females across classes. This is obviously a complex issue only gestured to here.

Physical Capital

Social class is discussed as it represents itself on the body as physical capital. To Bourdieu (1990a), the body is a bearer of symbolic value and is integral to the maintenance of social inequalities. Through one's body, status and distinction can be read as well as a relationship to people's social location.

> This refers not only to the body's implication in the buying and selling of labour power, but to methods by which the body has become a more comprehensive form of *physical capital*; a possessor of power, status, and distinctive symbolic forms which is integral to the accumulation of various resources…The production of physical capital refers to the development of bodies in ways which are recognized as possessing value in social fields. (Shilling, 1993b, p. 127, emphasis in original)

In contemporary times, influential visual images of the body are everywhere within popular culture: press, television and movies, and especially in advertising. As the media constantly churns out persistent reminders of the ideal, people learn that "the closer the actual body approximates the idealised images of youth, health, fitness and beauty, the higher its exchange value" (Featherstone, 1991, p. 177). Visual images invite comparisons, and with the proliferation of these images, many females find themselves constantly reminded of how they do not measure up.

Shillings' (1993b) analysis of "the social formation of bodies" uses habitus as one of the main factors in the development of the body. He stipulates that "the habitus is located within the body and affects every aspect of human embodiment" so that the resulting "gestures and…insignificant techniques of the body" (p. 129) are embodied actions. I agree with the notion that habitus is embodied, and will assume this as an aspect of physical capital.

Bourdieu (1990a, 2001) would argue that class is such an embedded feature of the habitus that it is a strong determining factor of the physical capital an individual can accumulate. He also posits that the value of physical capital does fluctuate (Shilling, 1993b). Bourdieu says that to understand this we must understand his concept of *social field*. Social field "refers to a set of *dynamic organizing principles*, ultimately maintained by social groups, which identify and structure particular categories of social practices" (Shilling, 1993b, p.138-139, original emphasis). Fields have relative autonomy from each other as physical capital changes within fields and as the fields that reward them change as well (Shilling, 1993b). Thus, the emphasis on the value of the body and the physical capital possibly gained can change depending on which social field is being discussed.

This search for distinction may involve regular struggles over defining and controlling fields (sport, fashion, media) in which bodily forms are most valued within a social group (Bourdieu, 1985). "Central to the value of different forms of physical capital at any one time, though, is the ability of dominant groupings to define their bodies and lifestyle as superior, worthy of reward, and as, metaphorically and literally, the embodiment of class" (Shilling, 1993b, p. 140).

Gender

Feminist praxis can be powerful. Women have unique stories, and because of their mistreatment historically, they are deserving of a re-telling and careful investigation of their current situation in a voice that desires change. For these reasons it is important that this research embody a feminist epistemology. In this case, I must investigate whether Bourdieu's (1984, 1990a) theory can include a notion of gender that is compatible with my own feminist one. Bourdieu believes that the production of knowledge is cumulative, and that concepts and theories can be "re-activated" (or modified) as the things that they encompass change with time and space (Laberge, 1995).

Historically, Bourdieu (1984, 1990a) has approached gender as a secondary *social* influence in the formation of habitus. I further Laberge's (1995) belief that gender should be incorporated as a primary dimension of the construction of social space and formation of the habitus if Bourdieu's work is to be used in good feminist conscience. Upon reading Bourdieu's (2001) *Masculine Domination*, it is now apparent that he sees gender (as an appropriation of masculinity and femininity) as the primary *symbolic* determinant of the habitus. Habitus is "historical and highly differentiated structures, arising from a social space that is itself highly differentiated…which always stands in a relation of homology with the fundamental distinction between male and female" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 104).

Habitus is a symbolic force or "embodied social law" that has produced, reproduced and become subject to the androcentric views and principles so highly valued in our society (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 51).

> The social relations of domination and exploitation…progressively embed themselves in two different classes of habitus, in the form of opposed and

> complementary bodily *hexis* [original emphasis] and principles of vision and division which lead to the classifying of all the things of the world and all practices according to distinctions that are reducible to the male/female opposition. (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 30)

In addition to acknowledging how habitus is produced through gendered experiences, Bourdieu (2001) is explicit about how the symbolic violence of male domination is "exerted on bodies directly…without any physical constraint; but on the basis of the dispositions deposited, like springs, at the deepest level of the body" (p. 38). He echoes the sentiments of many feminist analyses of the body in their conclusions of femininity as symbolic confinement, feminine comportment as restrictive, and feminine ways of bearing the body as associated with physically restraining females who adopt these practices (Bourdieu, 2001). Bourdieu also offers that although there are women who reject traditional notions of femininity, in general women are "encouraged more than men to develop their bodies as objects of perception for others" (Shilling, 1993b, p.133).

Bourdieu (2001) speaks directly to *gender* and its influence on class. For women entrusted with the responsibility for the conversion of economic capital into symbolic capital, some are more inclined "to identify with the dominant model" (Bourdieu, 2001, p.101) than others. Women of the middle classes (relying mostly on credit) are swept along by their desire to imitate and popularize the properties of the dominant classes, and can be found in expensive salons and boutiques spending beyond their means.

In a more historical sense, Bourdieu (1984) also acknowledges the consequences that the *sexual* division of labour has on class.

> Sexual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions. This is why there are so many ways of realizing femininity as there are classes and class fractions, and the division of labour between the sexes takes quite different forms, both in practices and in representations, in the different social classes. (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 107-108)

Shilling (1993b) also notes that "there are substantial inequalities in the symbolic values accorded to particular bodily forms" (p. 133).

According to Laberge, (1995) symbolic forms (like habitus) "have the power to preserve and transform current classifications in matters of gender, religion, age, and social status, through the words used to designate or to describe individuals or groups" (p. 140). Habitus is useful to the analysis of the body (as a gendered body) as it "constitutes a connection between symbolic structures and social structures, because habitus, the generating principle of practice, is at once the depository of symbolic forms and the internalization of social structures" (p .140).

Agency

One of the major criticisms of Bourdieu's (1984, 1990a) sociology is that he leaves little room for individual agency. Many interpret his notion of habitus as purely reproductive because there seems to be little account of any ability for transformation. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argued that "habitus is not the fate that some people read into it…habitus can be transformed via socio-analysis, i.e., via an awakening of consciousness and a form of 'self-work' that enables the individual to get a handle on his or her dispositions" (p. 133). In a later work Bourdieu (2001) elaborates that "one has also to take note of and explain the social construction of the cognitive structures which organize acts of construction of the world and its powers" (p. 40). In essence he is drawing attention to the social conditions that produce particular dispositions that allow individuals a certain point of view.

He explains that there always exists a choice for the individual, but this choice is always made within a structured situation that individuals do not consciously create. As a result, individuals tend to prefer the familiar and build up unconscious, unwilled strategies for avoiding the perception of other possibilities (Hoy, 1999). For women to reject their domination by men, it is not enough to remove the "physical impositions." There must also be a radical change to the knowledge through which women know themselves as dominated, and the practical ways they recognize it (Bourdieu, 2001).

I am interested in the concept of habitus in large part because of the potential for individual transformation and will tease out the complexities behind this statement. I believe that females are preoccupied with their bodies due to the complex history of their gendered oppression. In order for females to change the way their bodies are seen in their culture and in themselves (to resist domination, and empower themselves), females must first see themselves as oppressed or dominated (Hoy, 1999) and second, females must amass a knowledge base to know themselves as powerful. Bourdieu's (1984, 1990a, 2001) habitus shows us that people are commonly not in a position to see themselves as dominated, because their dispositions fit the circumstance in which they experience oppression. If females are to see their situation as oppressed, they need to exercise something Bourdieu refers to as 'social reflexivity.' By this he means that the better women understand the external constraints on their thoughts and actions, the more they will see through them and the less effective they will become (Hoy, 1999). "Symbolic domination is not the outcome of the logic of conscious thought, but of the obscurity of practical schemes of habitus, in which relations of domination, often inaccessible to reflective consciousness and the will, are inscribed" (Lovell, 2000, p. 33). For women to celebrate their "deviant bodies" is challenging and usually socially punished. For many, to give in to the pressures of normalized body hatred is actually easier than forgiving themselves for looking different.

In order for teen girls to exercise their agency, they must realize that they possess the ability to enact change. To educate females about multiple ways to experience, *feel* and perceive their bodies is to offer them a way of knowing and accepting themselves and others for who they are and not what they look like. I conclude that this would be a liberating strategy for the female body as a relief from the feeling that, as females, there is always the potential to be looked upon as mere bodies. Young girls may be willing to disrupt cultural patterns, and by re-educating or rehabilitating adolescent girls' knowledge of their bodies, the habitus that many will accumulate over time will be significantly different from the shared similarities that many adult women have today. "Educating instead means helping the young to form the habit of questioning, rethinking…their own and their cultures' gender habits" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 104).

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

My Feminism: From epistemology to methodology

Understanding the (specific) discourses behind how the female body has been conceptualized in social and feminist research allows me an informed place from which to conduct my own project. Here I briefly mention how feminist epistemologies and methodologies informed my ability to do good (feminist) research. I first explore how some feminists attempt to accomplish research that rejects the traditional research model and dichotomous thinking in the production of knowledge. Second, I show how the world of four female adolescents (participating in alternative physical activity) was explored through a feminist sociology. Finally, I address some limitations this project faced.

Bourdieu (1984 & 1990a) believes that those in power control the form that culture takes, and that power is sustained through cultural reproduction. These forms are distributed and reproduced in a hierarchical manner as individuals accumulate knowledge and experience through informal and formal education systems within a specific culture. The same hierarchical distribution of knowledge and methods of acquiring knowledge (in a traditional or non-traditional sense) exists within the fields of research. As feminists have often been educated and socialized into the traditional academic mode themselves, they must account for their own subjectivities and history while they further a determined feminist insistence to do away with dichotomous thinking. Bordo (1993a) argues that traditional research is grounded in scientism, which is based in Cartesian dualisms (Stanley, 1990, p. 12). To refute some of the dichotomies that researchers assume to exist is a refusal to accept that divisions, such as researcher and subject, object and subject, or knower and known, exist within the world of experience. According to feminists like Stanley (1990), objectivity is a set of intellectual practices used for separating people from the knowledge of their own subjectivity. She continues to suggest that within feminist research there is a crucial need for useful knowledge, that is theory and research as practice, as well as a commitment to this idea as a form of praxis. This project responds to Stanley's (1990) recommendation, contributing insight to feminist literature and useful knowledge to those who wish to implement knowledge in practical ways.

Stanley (1990) says that the rejection of the traditional academic model (both in the sense that it operates based on dichotomous thinking and that is does not account for reflexivity on the part of the researcher as part of the process of producing knowledge) can result in what she terms "unalienated knowledge" (p. 12). Rejecting the traditional academic model and embracing this unalienated knowledge invites the researcher to explore the conditions and circumstances of a feminist ontology with its faults and contradictions. These are, in part, the facts of a social construction of "women" as this construction is seen, understood, and acted upon by those who are feminists and see this construction as oppressive to women. "It is the experience of, and acting against, perceived oppression that gives rise to a distinctive ontology; and it is the analytic exploration of the parameters of this in the research process that gives expression to a distinctive feminist epistemology" (Stanley, 1990, p. 14). I uses reflexivity within this project as it contributes to my understanding of the experience I am investigating and my own role in the production of knowledge.

Providing me more to ponder upon, Olesen (1994) states that:

> feminists and their many voices share the outlook that it is important to center and make problematic women's diverse situations and the institutions and frames that influence those situations, and then to refer the examination of that problematic to

> theoretical, policy, or action framework in the interest of realizing social justice for women. (p. 158)

I am continually caught in an endless circle of questioning the value of my research to those I study. I value academic research but also value those who strive to improve the daily experiences of teen girls in their everyday lives. I want this project to contribute to the academic literature from a viewpoint that values practical knowledge and strives for practical change.

Through a feminist sociology I explored the world of female adolescents and their experiences in physical activity. The literature shows how females are socialized into culturally appropriate (and thus gendered) activities, roles, behaviours and dress, and that opportunities for physically active experiences are significantly different for girls and boys due to their gendered upbringing (Chandler & Goldberg, 1990; Pellet & Harrison, 1992; Vaughter, Sadh, & Vozzola, 1994; Young, 1990). In the literature review, how the female body is normalized in the minds of individuals and some of the bodily experiences of women was explored. The existing literature also contributes to an understanding of how traditional PE, sport and physical activity opportunities for teen girls do not necessarily provide positive experiences for them. In addition, insights from investigations of the bodily experiences of women have not been similarly considered for teen girls. I am interested in discovering if teen girls are aware of a relationship between physical activity and their bodies and what that connection means to them. My general research question is: What does participation in a non-competitive, alternative physical activity mean to the bodily experiences of teenage girls?

Initial ways that I can speak to a connection between the epistemology and methods include the following: to place value upon whatever experiences the girls have in the program, whether it relates to a positive sense of the body or not, and to honour that experience as worthy. I created an environment for the girls where they felt comfortable to use their voice, to express themselves, to share their views and opinions and to talk about their experiences.

Methods

Breaking a Leg

Four days prior to the commencement of the Hip Hop program in January 2004, I seriously injured myself while playing ice hockey. In a spilt second that would alter the next year of my life, I broke my leg and tore through most of the tendons and ligaments in my left ankle. Before I knew it, I found myself being wheeled in for surgery, having metal inserted into my ankle and being cast up to the knee. For the next nine weeks I was in a fully non-weight bearing cast and bound to getting around on crutches at which point I was slowly able to progress to standing on my own two feet. For this time, not only did I have to rely on others to drive me around, but also to accomplish the simplest of my daily needs.

For this project, I intended to be a fully participating participant-observer throughout the eight-week program. As it happened, I became a fully non-participating observer. With my immobility also came the realization that my ability to develop relationships with the girls had changed and that I would have to make a greater effort to make the personal connections with the girls as I had proposed.

Rapport

Developing rapport was of critical importance in conducting this research as I looked to elicit personal information from the girls and to develop an understanding of their experience (Fontana & Frey, 1998). Through my interactions with the girls I communicated to them, both non-verbally and verbally, that I was familiar with and sympathetic to this small part of their world (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) so that they felt comfortable disclosing information about their lives to me. I wanted them to feel that they had important things to say. I wanted to encourage them to teach me about what it is like to be them and analyse their experiences from their vantage points. Employing practical aspects of Schwandt's (2001) reflexivity helped facilitate my understanding of the girls as I remembered what it was like to be an adolescent girl. As the customs and 'culture bound' features of groups differ so dramatically, I paid special attention to the features of this particular group in order to develop the best working relationship possible (Spradley, 1979). In order to accomplish this, I was forced to think of new ways (because I was no longer able to participate) to involve myself as a part of the girls' experience of the program. I wanted the girls to feel comfortable with me, and feel as though they knew me when we spoke one on one. To achieve this, I tried to be as verbally and non-verbally supportive and as present as possible by being attentive to each participant. Throughout the program I made a concerted effort to smile at the girls, cheer them on and make eye contact as they practiced and learned new steps. During breaks I attempted to make small talk with them, convey my interest, and their importance. To convey my interest, I asked them follow-up questions as well as detailed explanations about things they said. I felt this was successful as I became aware of some of their likes and dislikes, hobbies, family relationships and friendships prior to the interviews.

To help bring the girls to me (a consequence of my immobility) I would always sit next to the area where they dropped their bags and water bottles, and bring healthy snacks for break times. For future reference, food always draws a crowd! I made a conscious effort to speak with participants on a one on one basis during each session to check in about the program and the other things in their lives. Despite the circumstances, these efforts enabled me to gain a better understanding of the girls prior to interviewing them.

Within the interview setting, I needed to appear relaxed and trustworthy to remove apprehension for the girls. According to Rubin & Rubin (1995), some ways to help participants overcome nervousness include showing an interest in their lives, showing them respect by acknowledging them as "experts" in their own lives, and being professional. Building rapport is a complex process says Spradley (1979) and "is facilitated by following certain principles: keep informants talking; make repeated explanations; restate what informants say; and don't ask for meaning, ask for use" (p. 83). Employing these tactics helped me to develop rapport with the girls. Because of the limited time I had with them, the age difference and my position as an observer and researcher, I remained an outsider in some way.

Observation

With a thorough explanation of what a researcher is observing and how he or she is doing it, readers will be more likely to trust her description of the event or subject. As

Wolcott (1994) suggests: "to judge whether a given account has 'internal consistency' or 'face validity'," requires that the reader understands what "prompted one thing and not another to come to" your attention (p. 157). The purpose of observing the participants for this study was two-fold. First, it provided another level of understanding of their experience as a means for cross-checking and triangulating information gathered in the interviews (Adler & Adler, 1998). By combining observation with other methods of data collection, Adler & Adler (1998), Denzin (1989), Janesick (1998) and Stake (1998) stipulate that observations can be a rigorous way of acquiring information. The other purpose of the observations was to develop an understanding of the relevant aspects, from which I developed and refined the interview questions, of the Hip Hop experience to the participants.

For the purpose of this project I used four strategies as a guide and identified four specific ways of observing for this study. First, I tried to get an overall feel for the session as a whole. By doing this I was looking at the flow of the session, the sequence of events, the energy of the session and the general mood of the group. Second, I compared the girls. As I looked at the group, I was looking for individuals with contrasting styles, abilities, and emotions, and the effect the group dynamic seemed to have on the individual and her comfort level. Third, I was looking for things that would serve as key indicators of ideas expressed in the literature. In this way I was looking at individual girls and how they occupied space, as well as how their movements depicted feminine gender norms as discussed by Bartky (1990), Bordo (1993b), Heywood (1999) and Young (1990). Last, I tried to identify the key "problem" confronting the group. In this manner I was looking for ways to describe this particular experience of dance in order to question them about it later. I took note of things like the girls' facial expressions and level of attentiveness, as these were perceived to indicate their comfort level both within the group and with Hip Hop itself. As the girls were encouraged to perform the movements in their own ways and to add their own "style," their ability to do this was recorded. This idea emerged as particularly important to this experience as the program progressed.

As my field notes started to accumulate, the aspects of the program that were most relevant and important to the girls started to emerge. I continued to learn as the weeks progressed and became more proficient in my ability to document the most relevant aspects of the sessions. My experience mirrored that described by Spradley (1979), that the observational processes "form a funnel, progressively narrowing and directing researchers' attention deeper into the elements of the setting that have emerged as theoretically and/or empirically essential" (cited in Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 87). As time passed, I found myself able to document the sessions in greater detail as many of the elements of each session repeated themselves as the data became what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call "saturated." This refers to the moment in research when incidents are readily classified, categories are filled with similar findings, and a sufficient numbers of regularities emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My field notes became saturated in relation to the sequence of events in each session, the location within the group that the girls placed themselves, the relative abilities of the four girls and the ways in which the leader ran the sessions.

As an observer looking to make a connection with the participants, I felt it was important for me to give the group my full attention and fill in the details later. This meant that the notes I made during the sessions were brief and meant to be reminders rather than full descriptions. Goffman (1997, in Travers, 2001) suggests taking notes when you can and writing them up later. He also notes that an understanding of a situation can be enhanced by simply watching. Immediately upon leaving the program site and during the day following each session, I would go through my field notes and spend time filling in the gaps, adding important details or fleshing out ideas. In my research journal I made notes for the next session with thoughts about particular things to watch for, perhaps to verify an observation. At the end of each session's notes I would write about my overall inclinations of the session, with possible larger questions of relevance to the project.

Interviewing

In preparation for each group and individual interview, I went through the following process. Prior to arriving at the interview site, each tape was appropriately labeled with the group or individual's name, the date and time. The tape recorder batteries were charged, and back-ups of both tape and batteries were accounted for. Fresh question sheets were prepared for each participant, and the tape recorder was checked to ensure that it was working. Upon arriving on site, the name of the participant, date and location of the interview was spoken into the tape recorder and played back as a final check that the tape recorder was in working order. All consent forms had been signed in advance so I began recording our conversations as soon as the girls were settled in the room.

All interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format, which means that I introduced topics and directed discussion by asking specific questions around certain topics and general themes (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interviews were approached more as directed conversations, listening intently for emotion and reading non-verbal cues (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) than as an opportunity to obtain a specific answer. This was important as I attempted to both understand the experience of the girls and to allow their voices to tell their stories. Interviews with a feminist spirit are ones which "let the ideas emerge from the interview, from the lives and examples of the interviewees" according to Rubin & Rubin (1995, p. 38). Some of the interview mechanisms I incorporated from Spradley (1979) included the following. I would frequently give the girls opportunities to convey information as though it were about one of their friends, allowing them to convey sensitive information without making it personal. This is what Spradley calls "third person monologues." I also incorporated the use of ignorance and repetition, pausing and expanding when appropriate (see Spradley, 1979, pp. 55-68). Expressing ignorance tells the interviewee that "I'm not bored, you're not telling me something I already know" (p. 57) and encourages the participant to elaborate on the topic. Repetition refers to asking for clarification by phrasing a question in different ways to more completely understand the participant's views or involvement. Pauses in conversation can provide the interviewer with time to think and express interest, while a participant may pause to be sure she is answering the question properly. This gives the interviewer an opportunity to encourage participants to continue. Finally, expanding refers to the elaboration of a basic question with repeated phrases allowing the participant time to think and prepare her answer.

Throughout the interview process I used teen magazines as a tool to stimulate discussion. My intent was to use the magazine content as an example of the dominant images that are targeted to teen girls through the media (Currie, 1999). The pictures and advertisements were especially useful in the two group interviews as we could orient our discussion to specific images. This process helped me to understand the girls' perceptions about particular representations of the female body with the knowledge that we were all talking about the same thing. Through Currie's (1999) exploration of adolescent magazines, how girls are seen, how femininity is portrayed and how girls negotiate these ideas in this medium is understood. Going through these magazines also stimulated the discussion around the types of conversations that the girls engaged in with their friends and provided visual references to our conversations. The magazines I purchased were in response to questioning the girls about the magazines they are most likely to buy or read. The magazines all target the teen girl population and included the April 2004 editions of *Seventeen, Cosmo Girl, Teen People*, and *YM*.

Group Interviews.

The first interviews I did were two short group interviews during the last two program sessions. During the group interviews I acted as a moderator directing the interaction of the participants in a semi-structured way allowing them to identify key themes (Fontana & Frey, 1998). According to Fontana and Frey (1998) the skills needed for a group interview do not differ much from those for an individual interview. There are, however, three main things to consider: to keep one person (or group of people) from dominating the conversation, to encourage reluctant respondents to participate and to allow for a full coverage of the topic by obtaining responses from the entire group. In addition to this, "the group interviewer must simultaneously worry about the script of questions and be sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction" (Fontana & Frey, 1998, p. 55).

These two interviews were conducted sitting in a circle on the floor, and conversation revolved mostly around topics like clothing, hair, shopping, music, dancing, movies, girlfriends and boyfriends, as well as the program and program leader. I opened each group interview session with a task for the girls in order to break the ice without getting too personal. In the first session they were required to find a picture in one of the magazines that they liked, the only condition being that it must contain at least one female. In the second session they had to find a picture of a female whose visual style they liked. Because I had transcribed the dialogue from the first group interview prior to the group's second meeting, I was able to clear up some of the questions I had about what the girls said previously, ask for clarification on meaning and probe more deeply into their responses. The second group session also provided the girls with another opportunity to become comfortable with me in an interview setting prior to the individual interviews. Both group interviews were conducted after the Hip Hop session during the sport hour of the program. In both cases the interviews lasted forty-five minutes and involved all four participants. For both sessions I brought homemade treats and juice.

Some of the questions I was trying to satisfy in the group interview were: What made these girls different from one another? What questions were they unable to answer? What particular things interested particular girls?

Individual Interviews.

The time I spent with the girls during the individual interviews was critical as I sought to expand on the information that I had already collected and to verify that my interpretations of the previous encounters were accurate. My main objective for the individual interviews was to get a deeper sense of the girls as individuals and more fully understand the experience from their perspective. This was my final opportunity to do member-checks with the data from the two prior interviews and validate what I had already observed and written.

For each interview I prepared a series of questions that I asked of all four girls. These questions were produced from the observations I made, the most important or interesting group discussions and the conclusions and assumptions I had made from these interactions. In each case, they were asked to provide insight into these discussions from their perspectives. The other questions I prepared varied between participants and pertained to specific topics that had been revealed to me by individual girls up to that point. As each of the girls' situations and upbringing was unique, so too would their experiences of this program. I tried to cater these interviews specifically to each individual by allowing each girl to guide the conversation to allow a better understanding of her unique situation. Throughout this process I made very few notes as I found that I was better able to commit my full attention to the conversation by making supplemental notes following the interview.

Two processes I found useful as I collected my data were the contact summary sheet and the memoing process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I produced a contact summary sheet, which materialized as a single sheet describing the key points of the interview and the essence of the encounter, immediately following each interview (these are included in Appendix A). Alongside this was a continual memoing process, which included my inclinations, impressions, and initial interpretations of the data, to myself in my research journal.

The most important function of the interview process was to give the girls voice. To facilitate this, I made a concerted effort to let them tell their stories and only stopped them to ask for clarification or more detail. It is integral to the feminist backbone of this project to remain conscious of this and allow the girls' voices to be read with integrity.

Two weeks after interviewing the girls, having transcribed the tapes and read through the dialogue, I prepared a set of questions about the program and the girls' experiences in preparation for an interview with the program leader Carmen. Although I had not planned to do an interview with her, it made sense to use this opportunity to verify some of my inclinations about the girls as an observer and ask her about her experience.

Description

Transcription.

As recommended (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sparkes, 2002; Wolcott, 1994), I purposely engaged in the transcribing process immediately and continuously as interviews were conducted. My purpose in this method was to enhance my ability to create excellent questions for later interviews by understanding previous conversations. This effort to understand the girls' experiences prompted me to perform member-checks (or member validation) to clarify previous responses with the girls and ask for elaboration on specific concepts. As "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" according to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314), member-validation was incorporated on two separate occasions: in the second group interview and in the individual interviews.

There is a significant amount of literature regarding how (conventional) transcriptions are prone to "ideological distortions that 'tidying up' can produce" (Seale, 1999, p. 151) as 'verbatim' records of conversations are often highly edited and therefore selective. In this and many other ways, the conventions of transcribing influence how people perceive what happened and the authenticity of the experience that was recorded (Edwards, 1993). This process is one more area where my interpretation of the event affected the subsequent analysis and, therefore, the implications of the study. Although I am aware of the diverse and complicated ways that transcripts can be produced (Edwards, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seale, 1999; Wolcott, 1994), for this project the interviews were transcribed verbatim without the addition of extra detail. "The level of detail required in describing data must remain a matter of judgement, taking account of the degree to which claims are central to an overall argument in a particular research study" (Seale, 1999, p. 152). This project is concerned with girls' experiences of their bodies and is not designed to investigate the intricacies of our conversations in greater detail. Due to my decision not to engage with the dialogue in a more detailed way (like the conventions of conversation analysis dictate, for example) basic verbatim transcriptions are deemed appropriate for this project. Without qualitative software to sink my data into, I wanted transcripts that made sense of the conversations we were having and that triggered my memory to recount the moods and emotions that accompanied our words.

For this project I effectively wanted to 'freeze in time,' with a minimum of irrelevant and distracting detail, what was said in the interviews through the transcriptions. This is another process through which my judgements about what was deemed irrelevant and distracting influenced this research. Edwards (1993) suggests making decisions about the structure of transcriptions based on two principles: "that the transcript preserve the information needed…in a manner which is true to the interaction itself," and "that its conventions be practical with respect to the ways in which the data are to be managed and analyzed" (p. 4). In this case I also chose to construct my transcripts in a way that would facilitate using bits of them in the discussion with ease. Dialogue from our conversations was represented vertically down the page and non-verbal (gestures, indications of emotion, etc.), as well as explanatory asides, were included in parentheses following the particular comment. To continue this research from a feminist approach, my goal was to allow their written voices to be as authentic as possible and to avoid criticizing their ability to know what they know. From this viewpoint I chose not to develop transcripts that further fractured our conversations. Due to my adherence with established qualitative methods, I can reason that the girls' experiences are represented as accurately and correctly as possible within an environment that has been inevitably subjected to my interpretations and biases.

Analysis

Coding.

As I completed the transcription process, I began analyzing the data with the intent to "discover themes and concepts embedded throughout the interviews" (Rubin &

Rubin, 1995, p. 226). This process of 'transforming data' involved the "systematic procedures followed in order to identify essential features and relationships" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 24) that point to what is known. I began coding – words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs whose meaning in the specific context of this project began to take the form of a category label that represented them (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As I initially began to describe the data, I allowed it to unfold in the (chronological) order in which it was acquired; my observations informed the questions I posed to the group and these transcriptions informed the questions and re-working of questions I then posed to the individuals. This process was valuable to show how the questions were arrived at and the order in which things were done. Upon looking at the data, however, I restructured it into the categories that were most important to this investigation: the girls and their experiences in the program. As you will read in chapter four, the girls will be introduced as cases (or characters) and the specific experience (the Hip Hop program) will be the backdrop against which the data will be presented. According to Wolcott (1994) the thorough description of data through plot or character is an acceptable ways to organize and present the results of qualitative research.

As I combed through the transcripts, the structure of how the coding would be done began to become clear to me: pattern codes emerging from the data itself, descriptive codes concerning the individual girls in the study, and thematic codes from the literature. Imposing a structural order to coding according to Miles & Huberman (1994) is important for the data so that it "relate[s] in coherent, study-specific ways" (p. 62). Analysing the data along the same lines as it was proposed and collected, says Wolcott (1994), is a common procedure in qualitative work. Pattern codes, descriptive codes and thematic codes were all applied to the raw data to sift it into manageable chunks. Applying these large codes helped to greatly reduce the amount of raw data I started with. As large chunks of data became more manageable and specific to particular topics, I then went through the coded segments and applied sub-codes to them. This is where I was looking for patterned regularities, "the what-goes-with-what" (Wolcott, 1993, p. 33) that contributed to my understanding of what was going on in the data. As I progressed through these processes I was able to see larger chunks of data represented by smaller units of meaning, helping me to begin making sense of the girls and their experiences.

In the absence of qualitative software, I worked through my analysis armed with many highlighters and a lot of paper. As codes were applied to large segments of data, these segments were copied and pasted into separate Word documents and saved as separate files. This is essentially the method that I repeated throughout the analytical process to keep related data bits together. Colour coded highlighters and coloured paper helped give me a visual representation of how the data was being broken down. I assigned large codes a specific colour, and printed hard copies on coloured paper. At the level of sub-coding, I turned to highlighters to differentiate between codes. The level of detail to which the data was coded was based on retaining the integrity of the girls' voices. According to Miles & Huberman (1994) and Wolcott (1994), the level of detail depends on the study and the researcher's question at hand.

Honoured qualitative analytical procedures have led me to certain types of conclusions by following both mechanical procedures and my intuitive and reflexive capabilities. Through this process I have come to recognize that, regardless of how closely I followed the regulations of qualitative analysis, I have not gotten it all, and there were gaps in the data. To help minimize this I kept a detailed research journal carefully documenting my process and providing a running commentary to myself. I found this process helpful and moderately creative (essential to keeping my spirits up!) as I waded through the data.

Interpretation

Moving on from analysis, I became simultaneously nervous and excited. I had been properly warned about over-generalizing, over-interpreting and over-reading my data. I did not want to commit an over-abundance of written blunders. I found my answer, in part, as I began to create visual representations of my analysis. Data displays are designed to present the full data set so the reader is able to capture the essence of the project and "should be arranged systematically to answer the research question at hand" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 92). I have included an example of a display I created for my data in Appendix B. I found this process very useful and as a visual learner, very fulfilling to be able to express ideas, themes and concepts in a visual way. Choosing a network style of display I patched together sequences of concepts into a large and complex web of findings. In terms of helping to draw and verify conclusions, detect differences and see patterns and themes, this was the most useful exercise for me (Travers, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994).

As I began to build a larger understanding of the girls' experience, I wanted to ensure that my interpretations emerged from a rigorous process that has been proven effective by qualitative researchers. Using Miles & Huberman (1994) as my guide, my intent was the same as a chapter's title: *Making good sense: Drawing and verifying conclusions*. In order to do this, I followed four general tactics: first, I looked for comparisons or contrasting evidence within the data and across participants, and then asked myself if this evidence was of practical significance. Second, I looked at interrelationships between themes in the data. Many of these sorts of conclusions have been made evident through published literature, so I was looking for specific applications to the girls' experience in this particular instance. The third tactic was to build a logical chain of evidence that required all relationships between claims to make sense. In this way I was checking for conceptual coherence within my findings. Finally, I needed to challenge my prediction that Bourdieu's (1984 & 1990a) theory of habitus would suit an investigation of teen girls' experience of Hip Hop dance. This final tactic involved subjecting my findings to the theoretical architecture of the project to see how it worked.

As Wolcott (1994) stipulates: "for interpretation, theory provides a way to link our case studies, invariably of modest scope, with larger issues" (p. 43). It is not my intent to represent the experiences of all female adolescents, but rather to identify and represent the specific experiences of the four girls with whom I observed and spoke. Connecting what was found to be meaningful to these four girls with established social and feminist theories will allow me to make some connections and draw some conclusions about the particular experiences of the girls and their involvement with the Hip Hop program.

Bias

Throughout the research process, I used reflexivity as a methodological tool as described by Schwandt (2001): "to refer to the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, and so forth" (p. 224). More than just to help understand the influence I had as a researcher on the data throughout the process, "it can point to the fact the inquirer is part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 224). These sentiments are also echoed in Atkinson & Hammersley (1998). In this way I am attempting to account for my own experiences as a female in physical activity and subject myself as both observer and interpreter to the same "critical analysis as that of the constructed object at hand" (Boudieu & Wacquant, 1992, 41).

> To the charges that the researcher brings her own biases…feminist researchers would reply that bias is a misplaced term. To the contrary, these are resources and, if the researcher is sufficiently reflexive about her project, she can evoke these as resources to guide data gathering or creating and for understanding her own interpretations and behaviour in the research…What is required, they would argue, is sufficient reflexivity to uncover what may be deep-seated but poorly recognized views on issues central to the research and a full account of the researcher's views, thinking and conduct. (Olesen, 1994, p. 162)

I have tried to be reflexive about my own experiences and the ways they have impacted how I conducted this research. Doing this is an attempt to make sense of my biases and come to understand how I approached this research and the conclusions I have come to.

The most significant reason I embarked on this project stems from my own positive experiences as an active female. Sport and physical activity have been a consistent backdrop and influence in my life from a very young age. Looking back now, I realize that my experiences as an active female have given me more than just skill and expertise on the playing fields, but my academic and extracurricular passions as well. My earliest memories are those of my parents exposing me to a variety of activities. My dad was at the helm guiding me through the skills of throwing and catching, running, biking and swimming. I was rewarded for my achievements and not reprimanded, even if I was more interested in the dandelions in the outfield than the actual softball game. Above all, I remember playing not practicing. As a child I had success as a dancer, my two to three night a week commitment allowing me to perform well in competitions and achieve high marks in examinations.

As an adolescent, my athletic experiences expanded. I played a school sport every season, participated in camps over the summer and took leadership roles on the teams in which I played. I was rewarded for my dedication, participation, leadership and skill. Through these years I also became increasingly more involved in dance, choosing a studio requiring a forty-five minute commute to classes and rehearsals which occupied me five to six days a week. I trained with a very competitive studio and experienced continued success during these years provincially. At the age of seventeen I began teaching beginner jazz and ballet classes and was able to try my hand at choreography.

Following two summers of playing field hockey at the provincial level, I arrived at Queen's University, tried out and made the varsity team. As a part of the small and spirited physical education faculty there, I spent a great deal of time in the gym with friends and fellow athletes. Physical activity was a daily part of our lives, and as a group we played a variety of intramural sports, and impromptu games. As an avid skier in the years following my undergraduate days, I found myself in a personal heaven when I accepted a job at a ski resort in the Kooteney's of British Columbia. Although that dream lasted a few short years I continue to recognize my relationship with physical activity as a guiding force in my life and a part of my life where I am always willing to try new things.

I have included this brief biography to show the reader that activity is a strong determinant of my own habitus. Without this kind of relationship with physical activity I do not think that I would have been able to conceive of the notion that the unconscious dispositions of the body are capable of guiding our body conceptions and choices. Over the years I have learned many things about myself through my bodily experiences. I recognize that the physical strength, balance, coordination and spatial awareness possessed by individuals makes moving through this world different for each of us because of the knowledge we have in our bodies. I think of the ways that I am aware of my body's capabilities. Through my physical engagement with my body I *know* that I can lift heavy things, complete physical tasks and try new things. I also recognize, through multiple reconstructive surgeries, that this body can only be pushed so far before it falters. These kinds of knowledge are based on a lifetime of successes and failures, trial and error.

I further recognize the multiple ways my body has been evaluated by others in my lifetime. I recall a volleyball coach telling me that I was "just too short to play at a university level"; a dancer teacher saying "you work well with what you've got"; and a friend's mother noting that: "your legs are so muscular, what's your workout?" I could spend many pages explaining the ways in which I have carried these kinds of comments with me throughout my lifetime, but will merely acknowledge that my body has been viewed in different ways in different contexts. This is also to position my knowledge of my own success more as a result of hard work and commitment, than through a visual image. From a young age I was told that I would never make it as a professional dancer, and (although I probably had not yet made a decision about whether that was something I wanted) dancing became something I did for enjoyment, for a challenge and for myself. I remember the kinesthetic feelings I experienced through my body as I stretched, leaped and exhausted myself through each rehearsal. Through my kinesthetic bodily experiences I have thus been able to attend to the ideas in the literature that encourage the development of these kinds of relationships with the body. I have experienced personal satisfaction from participating in physical activity, despite the judgement that my body does not conform to the ideal.

My desire to share these kinds of experiences with girls and women was a driving force in this research. My choice of theorist, the questions I asked and the interpretations I made have all been influenced by my own involvement in sport and physical activity. When I was forming the questions I wanted to ask the girls, I did a lot of reflexive thinking back to the time when I was an adolescent, trying to remember the things that made sense to me at that time. Although the literature guided me, I used my own memories and inclinations to best predict the ways the questions would make sense to the girls. As I analysed and made interpretations about the data it became obvious that the statements and conversations I could relate to stood out initially. Fundamentally, I wanted this project to be a success. I also recognize that I felt a personal attachment to the girls and felt responsible for their experience in the program. Looking back at this process, I know that I have executed this research in accordance with honoured qualitative methods, but recognize that it has been shaped by my own experiences and biases.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS
The Project

Background

The City of Edmonton (Community Services Department, Innovative Services Section) has been running a program called *Go Girls* for teen girls between the ages of 12 and 17 since the fall of 2001. This program is a one-day event featuring approximately 16 different 'see and try' activities and sessions throughout the day (see Go Girl 2003 Agenda in Appendix C). The program was designed and implemented to support less active teen girls to pursue an active living lifestyle. To accomplish this, the event attempts to provide a variety of physical activity pursuits, access to resources on these activities, as well as information on nutrition and wellness issues. A long-standing goal of the *Go Girls* campaign has been to provide the participants with follow-up programs for those interested in pursuing an activity that they enjoyed. In order for teen girls to integrate active living into their lifestyles, they must have access to programs that encourage them to be active beyond the one-day *Go Girls* event. The most popular activity, as indicated by past *Go Girls* participants, was Hip Hop dance. As I developed a relationship with some key figures working for the City of Edmonton, this information was made available to me. Using this knowledge, we collaborated to develop a program that met the wants and needs of teen girls in our communities. An eight-week follow-up program was proposed, approved, and executed.

The Hip Hop program was developed to provide an opportunity for teenage girls to experience the various physical, social and creative challenges that make up the activity of Hip Hop dance. This project positioned Hip Hop as a *physical activity* and did not address its political messages with the girls. This program sought to be sensitive to ability and disability levels, as well as the cultural and financial backgrounds of the participants. The program was designed around a set of core values and principles (see Appendix D) and met quality assurance measures (as per the City of Edmonton) in all facets of the program. In addition, the program sought a progressive skill development approach to ensure interested participants could maximize their potential. An environment that would be welcoming and accepting of diverse body sizes and shapes, as well as one based on providing consistent positive feedback to all participants, was deemed important for this project. The program was delivered through the City of Edmonton's Community Service's program unit.

The Program

The *Go Girl* friendly Hip Hop program that was run in the winter of 2004 was a two-hour once weekly program run for 13-17 year old girls. Sessions ran for eight weeks and were free of charge. Each week the participants received one hour of Hip Hop instruction and one hour of just-for-fun sport activity. The program ran from February 5th to April 1st, 2004. The program was located at Kate Chegwin Junior High School and the Millwoods Recreation Centre, both in Southeast Edmonton. The location of the program was moved to the Recreation Centre on three occasions, allowing the girls access to the pool for the sport component of the program. The program ran from 6:00-8:00 p.m. each Thursday night.

The City of Edmonton's decision to combine the Hip Hop program with a sport program was a last minute change designed to offer the participants access to a wider variety of activities. In keeping with my original proposal to investigate the girls' experience of Hip Hop dance, their experience of the sport portion of the program was not questioned nor documented. I simply wanted to keep the project as focused as possible and did not see a need to expand the project. The two portions of the program were run by different instructors, and the Hip Hop program was consistently run from 6:00-7:00pm followed by the sport portion of the program.

Participants

Ethics approval for this project was received from the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta. All girls who had signed up for the program became eligible to participate in this study. During the eight-week period, between twelve and eighteen girls participated each week. During the first program session, I provided a verbal explanation of the study to eighteen girls between the ages of 13 and 17. I also gave the girls an opportunity to ask questions. Given this introduction, I circulated an Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendix E) to each girl to take home and read with their parents. For the first four weeks of the program, I made myself available to answer questions throughout the two-hour program, and remained on site before and after the program to answer questions from parents. At the end of the fourth session, I had obtained consent from five girls and their parents, and received no continuing interest from the other participants. To keep parents informed, I sent home notices of the dates of the group interviews, which occurred during the sport hour of the program. During the first group interview the girls were asked to choose a pseudonym for themselves that will identify them throughout this thesis. One of the girls who had given consent to participate in this study dropped out after week four, and due to my inability to reach her or her parents, she was consequently not interviewed. All individual interview meeting times were made over the phone with parents and interviews were conducted in the board room of the Millwoods Recreation Centre, between April 5th and April 9th, 2004.

The Setting

Kate Chegwin Junior High School – Gymnasium.

For five of the eight sessions, the program was located in the school gym of a junior high school in the southeast corner of Edmonton. The gym would be empty upon our arrival except for one small table and a few chairs around the periphery. I would locate myself at this table, along the sidelines at the centre court mark, near the entrance to the gym. The leader of the program, Carmen, would set up to my left so that the girls would be facing the wall behind me for most of the session. The girls would drop their coats, bags and water bottles in the area around the table and congregate in the half of the gym where Carmen would be getting ready. When the music started, the girls would spread into rows and be able to move freely without worry of running into each other. Carmen would make her way through the group helping the girls individually, but would come back to the front and turn the music off when addressing the entire group.

The Millwoods Recreation Centre – Squash Court.

For three sessions of the program the girls continued to learn Hip Hop skills in a squash court at the Millwoods Recreation Centre. The twelve to fourteen girls who attended these particular sessions were prone to running into each other or accidentally flinging an arm or leg at their neighbour in this small space. Some of the logistical challenges that faced Carmen in the squash court were the lack of power outlets for her CD player and the constant noise from other squash and racquetball courts. I sat on the floor along the middle of the front wall to be as out of the way as possible.

Vignettes

The Leader

Carmen.

A self-acclaimed "lifer" in the dance world, Carmen exudes her love of dance and movement. Coming up through community dance, she took her first studio dance class as an adult and vows to provide opportunities for those who, like her as a girl, cannot afford professional training. She does not have the stereotypical dancer's body but looks fit and is commonly dressed in trendy brand name clothing.

"Okay girls, meet me in the middle. Let's talk about the good things that happened to us this week."

Always arriving before the girls, Carmen sets up for class. She unpacks her CD player, her music selection, maybe some notes. She casually works through some of the steps the class may be learning or carefully picks a song for the warm-up. Dressed in athletic pants, a T-shirt and a hoodie, she could be mistaken for any of the girls in the class, except for the fact that her presence compels most of the girls' eyes to follow her every move throughout the session. She greets each girl with enthusiasm and warmth and asks them about their week or what they want to do today in class. Shortly after 6:00 p.m. each Thursday evening, Carmen calls the group into the centre of the gymnasium where they will sit and talk about their week for the first five minutes of the session. Carmen leads the sharing circle, ensuring that the girls that wish to speak get a chance.

The sharing circle breaks up, and Carmen starts the warm-up with a popular top 40's song, usually in response to something like, "Do you have the Black Eyed Peas?

Can we use it?" Her face is animated, and she's smiling as she weaves her way in and out of the girls, who are following her lead, staggered in a few rows at the front of the gym. As she gets to the back of the group, she yells "okay, everyone face me!" and finishes the warm-up from there. The girls in the back row are now in the front. Carmen manages the class in response to the girls and gives them opportunities to contribute and ask questions. Her body, moving dynamically and freely throughout the program session, mirrors her attitude. As the class progresses, she slowly reviews steps from the previous weeks, explains new movement patterns and encourages the girls to "add your own style, do it the way you want. You can be precise, smooth, bouncy, whatever! It's all about you."

The Girls

Laney – Age 15.

Standing five foot six with dark hair and blue eyes, Laney holds her lanky slim body with confidence. An only child, she lives with her mother and makes no mention of her father during our multiple conversations. She talks a lot about her mom, who works two jobs, as the most important person in her life, as well as her friends and how much time they spend together. She wishes her mom could afford to enroll her in studio dance classes but they do not have enough money. For now, low-cost community classes are her only option. Laney is energetic, excitable and always smiling, especially when she dances.

"I'm really all about dancing, any kind of dancing really, but I love hip hop the most."

At the beginning of each session in the front row stands Laney, wearing the same pair of purple bell-bottomed dance tights and black runners. She dances with her whole body. Her fingers and toes, and everything in between, are stretched as she carefully executes each step. Every moment she spends in the gym, she is moving; she practices, makes up her own sequences and totally immerses herself in the music. You can tell she has had some dance training, as she can move quickly, stay in control and remain aware of her surroundings. A big smile lights up her face when the music starts to play, and even though there is no audience, she performs.

Laney's hair looks different every week, complementing her clothes which are always put together in different funky and offbeat ways. She speaks optimistically about dancing as something she never wants to stop doing, because "it opened my eyes to think that things are possible, and I could probably do it if I put my mind to it." She talks about dance lessons in a studio being beyond her family's means, so she takes whatever classes she can in community halls and through programs like this one. She also watches music videos with her friends, learning new steps and creating dances of her own. She often shows these new steps to Carmen before or after the session and hangs out with Carmen when the class ends.

Ollivia –Age 13.

Ollivia is five foot two with brown eyes and short brown hair and usually appears as though she has just been through a wind storm. Ollivia and her younger brother live with their mom, who has recently separated from their dad, and they have just moved to a new area in the city. Her mom works for an insurance agency and her dad is a chef who has been confined to a wheelchair for many years. She talks about playing basketball with her dad on occasion but mostly hangs out with her little brother after school, watching television and playing on the computer, waiting for mom to come home.

"I like to play on the computer, on the Internet, and play with my friends. Sometimes we rent movies or read books or go swimming or something. Most of the time we just sit talking about something and laughing."

Spinning on the slippery gym floor and focused on the lines on the hardwood, Ollivia quietly waits for class to start. Ollivia's bangs are usually in her face, her T-shirt is usually untucked, and the bottoms of her cargo pants are usually lined with dirt. As the class begins she watches Carmen intently, trying to capture the movements with her own body. She is commonly turning the wrong way, kicking the wrong foot or flailing her arms in the wrong direction. She does not say much to the girls around her and is glued to Carmen's every move and word. Her moves are less refined and more out of control than the rest of the class, and she has trouble remembering the sequences of the steps. Her tongue sticks out of the corner of her mouth as she concentrates on the steps, sometimes losing her balance and disrupting another girl, although Ollivia does not seem to notice. She says that the program is "just fun" for her and does not describe any parts of the program as challenging.

Ollivia talks about feeling left out at school and how the girls in her class can be mean when people act and behave differently. "People's actions are why they can be labeled. They do something, and then they get a reputation for doing it, and so they get labeled that way. I don't think labels are always right about people. It's just gossip sometimes."

Raye –Age 15.

A slim and pretty girl, it is not hard to imagine why Raye has entered into the world of modeling. At only five foot two, it is understandable why she envisions her future celebrity status as a performer, not fashion model. Visiting her dad once a week, Raye and her younger sister live with their mother and step-father, although Raye talks about living with her dad full-time one day. Raye speaks knowingly about her family's lack of expendable income and indicates this as the major reason she constructs some of her own clothes from bargain finds. Her primary responsibility is to take care of her little sister and she wishes she had more time to pursue dancing and singing.

"I'm strange and different [so] you may laugh at me, because I'm different. But I laugh at you, because you're all the same. I'm not going to be what you want me to be. I'm going to be who I am."

Raye bursts into the gym with a new drama in her life each week, sometimes about her boyfriend, sometimes about her teacher, but always something. She interacts with the girls she knows and talks to Carmen before class about the things that are going on in her life. Ordinarily wearing baggy jeans and black hoodies, one-day she comes to class in a thin strapped tank top and fitted pants. Her black mascara, eyeliner, eye shadow and nail polish contrast with the smiley, cheerful and animated expressions on her face. Raye stands out from the group when she dances, as she adds her own steps to the movements and changes things up in the sequence as soon as she can remember them. She picks up the moves quickly and is often at the front of the class, at least until Carmen shuffles them around. One particular evening she is called upon to lead the warm-up, and although she stares at her feet for the first minute or so, she gradually brings her head up and looks back at her classmates.

Raye talks about many interests and activities that she likes to do in her spare time: "I love to sing, dance and write poetry. I like playing basketball, play[ing] soccer, volleyball, baseball; any sport really. I like listening to music, skateboarding, snowboarding." She has recently become involved in the modeling industry: "I like it [modeling], I like the attention…and I like to be the centre of attention." At the same time she talks about not wanting to be associated with modeling and considers herself a tomboy: "I'm more like a guy; I just act more like a guy then a girl would."

Tiffanie – Age 14.

At five feet, Tiffanie's appearance is polished, tidy and deliberate. She talks extensively about her morning dressing and make-up rituals and the importance she places on this process. She has one younger sister and they live with their cocker spaniel puppy and both parents who teach at the same junior high school. Her family spends a lot of time together being active, reading and vacationing. Tiffanie is very outgoing and likes to interact with her friends as much as possible, she also talks about enjoying learning new things and meeting new people.

"I'm easy-going, interesting, creative, think that my friends are really important and like doing all types of different things."

Blonde hair flowing just so, tailored jeans, and a thoughtful smile follow Tiffanie and her mom into the school gym each week. She sets her book bag down and comes over to chat. Armed with a vast array of stories about school, her dog, her family and friends, there is no shortage of things to talk about with her. She remains quiet throughout the class but claps her hands and smiles when she feels as though she has done something right. Tiffanie, sometimes behind the music and watching others for the next step, dances in fluid movements. She usually finds a spot in the second row, in the centre of the group and smiles at the floor when Carmen dances beside her. She talks about the Hip Hop program as a place where she can express herself in different ways than she does in her day to day life. For her it is an environment where she feels free.

Tiffanie talks about participating in many different activities in her spare time: "I love to read, I like to play on the computer, and like, play all kinds of sports like soccer - that's my favorite, swimming, rock climbing, skiing, tobogganing and almost anything really. I like shopping with friends and hanging out. My friends are really important to me." She has a very close relationship with her parents, and although she finds them overbearing and strict on occasion, she says they generally agree about things. "My parents have this really big thing about trust and are really involved in my life. It's really hard keeping any kind of secret from them."

Themes

Through the data collection process, I learned a lot from Laney, Ollivia, Raye and Tiffanie. Our conversations ranged widely in topic area as they allowed me to see into their lives through our dialogue. A limitation to this project is that I did not do follow-up interviews with the girls. With the knowledge I have gained through this process I would advocate another round of interviews for a deeper understanding of their experiences, as well as to understand how the girls' perceptions of their experiences may have changed. The point at which I developed questions about the data was post-analysis, and I would like to suggest that a second interview would be most beneficial at that time.

From the time I spent with the girls and our conversations I was able to collect rich and meaningful data as they relate to their experiences in the Hip Hop program. The following nine themes represent the data as it relates to the girls' experiences: music, pop culture, space and comfort, leadership, physical capital, gender, self, being active and bodily experience. I will first introduce each theme. Then, I will describe what it is and its limitations, its significance to the project and the context in which it will be discussed. Finally, I will provide examples from my observations and interviews with the girls in support of the themes.

Music

The effects that music had on the girls can be described by the ways that it energized the group. When Carmen turned the music on, the girls were generally greeted by songs that had been popular over the radio and through the artist's music videos. In this way, the music was familiar to the girls, and this was evident as they sang along and discussed the video. Sometimes they knew the moves made famous by the artist. In this case, upbeat mainstream pop and R & B music by artists, such as Britney Spears, The Black Eyed Peas Beyonce, and Christina Aquilera, dominated the sessions. In the context of this Hip Hop program, music provided the baseline upon which the rhythms and movements of the dance were constructed. As a dancer I can relate to how music provides a starting point from which to explore movement using one's body as a means of expression.

A limitation of this study is the lack of discussion of the meanings and messages of Hip Hop or rap music. In the context of this study, however, it is important to discuss the influences of popular culture, (which is to follow) as reflected in both the music used and the style of Hip Hop taught to the girls. I say this because, Carmen's personal style (i.e., the way that she dances and thus models the movements) is arguably a "Hip Hop-ed" version of contemporary jazz dancing, or dancing commonly taught in mainstream studios. This dance program was delivered to provide teen girls with a physical activity they enjoy, and did not pay attention to the implied political, class, race or culture based influences or meanings of Hip Hop. The style of dance taught in this program can probably be best described as a commercialized version of Hip Hop that has been made available to the mainstream by white middle class choreographers and dancers. In the case of both mainstream pop and Hip Hop or rap music, lyrics give music its meaning. Especially in the case of Hip Hop, its music and cultural roots are deeply intertwined (Denisoff, 1988). Although this influence is recognized here, these meanings and messages are not investigated at this time.

In the first three weeks of the program Carmen showed the girls several video clips from movies, dance shows and concerts to expose the girls to a variety of movement styles that dance can encompass. From a critical perspective, these clips represent mainstream versions of dance like studio jazz, music video choreography and the appropriations of Hip Hop used in movies. As she led the program sessions, Carmen consistently encouraged the girls to explore their own movement style and feel the music.

In talking with the girls, they agreed that they liked the music used in the program. I asked them what music meant for them in the Hip Hop experience.

> I just love to dance, and I love music. It [music] gives me like an energy or something. When I hear the music…I just leave all [my] worries behind and go to a different world. (Laney)
>
> You have to really feel the music. Like you have to listen, and then if it's really happy music…you suit your mood to go with that music. I can match my dancing to the music most of the time. (Tiffanie)
>
> All the music was really good. It just makes me happy. (Raye)

Although the girls commented that music made them feel energized, happy and free, they gave me no indication that they paid attention to its lyrical content, meanings or messages. When we talked about their favorite types of music, favorite groups and why they liked that particular music, the girls responded by saying: "Cause I can dance to it." (Laney). "I don't know, I just like it," (Ollivia). "I like everything, every kind of music" (Tiffanie). Knowing how much the girls liked the music they danced to, I asked Carmen how she chose music for the girls:

> Music's hard…I pick music that I like and that [the girls] listen to…but music and Hip Hop is hard, because everything that is "Hip Hop" has cursing and derogatory slurs towards women. A lot of times, it's something that shouldn't be listened to by girls of this age. Still they hear it. So it's a judgement call. A lot of times, they don't listen to the words. They just listen to the beat. For the most part we dance to more pop music; that's the stuff they know. (Carmen)

As indicated by Carmen, the lyrical content of Hip Hop and rap music can be questionably suitable for some teen girls. Her response also suggests that she is either unaware or unconcerned with the political and racial meanings of the music. As I did not analyse the lyrical content of the music used in this program, I did not request Carmen to either. I recognize that the girls, Carmen and myself are biased in the ways that we see race and class, and in the ways we have experienced these things ourselves. Because of this, I want to acknowledge that our biases did not disappear for this project and that the program was not neutral on this issue.

This section is a mere gesture to the effect that music has in an environment like this one. Due to the research question at hand and this project's focus on the girls' relationship with their bodies, it remains a limitation. The following section will continue the analysis of the dance program as a part of popular culture.

Popular Culture

The ways in which pop culture is related to this project are endless. Teen girls growing up today in North American culture are clearly informed by the domains of pop culture which include, but are not limited to, magazine, music, television, movie, advertising, fashion, beauty and health discourse. From the literature of Bartky (1990), Bordo (1993b), Featherstone (1991), hooks (1997) and Shilling (1993a) we can understand how popular images have meanings and how, for girls and women, these meanings revolve around the youthful and beautiful body. The female body is subjected to normalizing forces through these discourses, and girls inevitably begin to see societal ideals as their own opinions and beliefs.

To focus this analysis on the *visual* images in popular culture is to first understand the importance of visual images as they are portrayed in the media. This notion includes the recognition of visual images (through appearance, gesture and demeanour) as a more concrete reality than former influences like the (more abstract) written word (Kern, 1975 cited in Featherstone, 1991). Words tend to be more intangible allowing individuals to conjure up multiple representations of them in their minds. The cultural preoccupation with appearances and the proliferation of visual images in consumer culture persuades individuals to compare themselves constantly to the images of others and, themselves through past photographic images (Featherstone, 1991). Drawing on Foucault, Bartky (1990) speaks to the cultural importance placed on the visual image as a disciplining influence over the female body in modern society: "To subject oneself to the new disciplinary power is to be up-to-date, to be 'with-it'…it is presented to us in ways that are regularly disguised" (p. 80). Media representations of the female body are obviously read by individuals in multiple ways. According to Bordo (1993b), popular images of the female body are both "homogenized" and "normalized." Homogenized images are those that have "smooth[ed] out all racial, ethnic, and sexual 'differences' that disturb Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual expectations and identifications" (Bordo, 1993b, p. 24). These homogenized images are then normalized, "that is, they function as models against which the self continually measures, judges, "disciplines,' and 'corrects' itself" (ibid, p. 25).

Limitations I faced in fully understanding the influence of popular culture in the lives of these girls begin with an understanding of the complicated ways these messages are conveyed. Without a considerable amount of time devoted to understanding the specific influences each girl is exposed to, I am unable to make specific conclusions about them. Another limitation is the way I have chosen to represent the influences of pop culture as visual and the literature I am familiar with that describes these influences. Similar to the above statement, there are multiple ways to analyse pop culture influences, yet this is the manner I have chosen to do it in here.

In postindustrial societies where change is ongoing, the peer group instead of the family becomes responsible for much of the transmission of cultural information. A thorough documentation of the influences of the peer group is provided in a later section of this chapter. In addition to the peer group replacing familial influence, the mass media has come to provide adolescents with the majority of their role models (Heilman, 1998). According to Marovelli, Scott & Crawford (1987), the media performs three major functions: it allows for surveillance of the world to report on ongoing events; it provides an interpretation of the meaning of the events; and it contributes to the socialization of individuals into their cultural settings. From this list it seems plausible that the media can be a substantial influence on adolescents in the search for the self. If the source of adolescents' interpretation of the meanings of world events is so pervasive, it is important to know the relationship these girls have with popular culture. The major ways of describing the data in relation to the influence of pop culture are through the public representation of the self and the expression of "normal."

I wanted to know if these four girls felt that they were represented by the images of girls and women they see in the media. Recognition of the influence of popular culture in this way allowed us to discuss the relevance of visual images to these girls. Raye and Laney responded that they are able to see parts of themselves represented by the images they see in magazines and elsewhere, while Ollivia and Tiffanie said that they were not. Raye talked about punk girl bands, snowboard style and Pink ("I relate to her so much") as a role model coming from a home of bitterly divorced parents. Laney describes the style of musicians like Alicia Keys who "write their own music and songs and don't need to be slutty to be famous." She admires and relates to them in her search for her own individuality and talent.

The socially constructed battle with one's body between control and consumption as described by Featherstone (1991) represents itself in the girls' everyday lives.

> Discipline and hedonism are no longer seen as incompatible, indeed the subjugation of the body through body maintenance routines is presented within consumer culture as a precondition for the achievement of an acceptable appearance and the release of the body's expressive capacity. (p. 171)

The four girls were able to recognize the social pressures that direct females to achieve a particular (ideal) body type, to adorn that body in particular ways and to feel as though these achievements are under their control. All four girls indicated that they enjoy shopping for clothes and "stuff" and that looking trendy and "in" is important to them. Ollivia places importance on "how [clothes] look" when she's shopping, although I found it difficult to *see* this based on her appearance. I asked the girls to describe what they look for when they shop for clothes.

> I don't really ever get to buy much, but I really like looking. I wish I could spend more [money] on clothes. I try to work with what I've got, but it's nice to have new things and try out new looks. (Laney)
>
> I like trendy things, sparkly things, lots of different things. (Tiffanie)
>
> Raye: I don't follow trends; I just like what I like.
> Sue: How would you describe what you're wearing? (Raye is wearing black cargo pants, a white tank top and a hoodie)
> Raye: Well, I guess it's a little bit trendy. Hoodies are kinda everywhere I guess. But it's not skanky! This is what I wear most days.

I had asked Raye to describe her current attire, because I thought that this look of hers has been popularized through mainstream fashion culture.

The girls' desire to look "normal," yet express themselves as unique, is another way they were able to express the dominant messages about the female body. They described their concept of normalcy as coming from cultural sources like magazines and television, but also from the peer groups and subcultures they subscribe to. Normality is read on the body for them, so their ability to adorn themselves with appropriate "in" clothing to create the proper look is an important way they express this. Consider this conversation to understand their perceptions.

> Raye: People are afraid to be different. A lot of people are. They're afraid of what people will think of them. Will they be popular? Will they be an outcast? Or will they be 'all that'? Or will they be labeled something else like a loser or something.
> Tiffanie: It's not right.
> Laney: I swear you have to be dressed in this shirt with this bag or you're "different" in a bad way. I don't get it!

From this discussion it is important to recognize the girls' ability to see how the female body is portrayed in pop culture and their knowledge of the normalizing influences it has over what types of images are acceptable for them to portray. The girls were able to indicate a desire for the acceptance of more unique or individual representations of the body but not as a way to change the politics of the body.

Space & Comfort

The themes of space and comfort overlap considerably when talking about how the girls know their bodies in space (kinesthetically) and their level of comfort in the class. This is important to the project as it relates to theorists like Young (1990) and Bartky (1990) and their descriptions of the contemporary female body and how our cultural conceptions of femininity resign females to an experience of the world that is more confined and restrained than our male peers. These feminist scholars stipulate that the guidelines of femininity may limit girls' and women's ability to experience their physicalities fully. Girls and women adopt a physical comportment that allows limited confidence, assertiveness and occupation of space. This speaks to how the girls use their bodies in space and their comfort level (in the group) to do so.

A full understanding of how notions of space and comfort affect the girls is limited within this project in several ways. This begins with the knowledge that they were observed and interviewed in one isolated experience. Perhaps for some of the girls, they are able to engage their bodies in different ways with the space around them during different activities. My bias as a dancer trained to be in perfect synchronization with a group, to look for the smallest flaws and to appreciate technique will also affect my ability to attend to different ways of performing a movement. My eye has been trained to look for certain things in a dance environment. This training allows me to understand movement in one way while limiting me from seeing it in others. The girls' ability to articulate their perceptions of their bodies also leaves a gap in the data.

I looked at how openly and freely the girls used their bodies in the area around them to make judgements about their use of space. I measured this by evaluating how close their movements were held against their bodies or, inversely, how they stretched or extended their movements into the space around them. In this case, I observed Laney to make use of her whole body when dancing. I would describe her as performing the movements in as big a way as possible, reaching and stretching her arms and legs as much as she could. Laney's moves are those of a more polished dancer, as she maintained control while extending herself through the movements. Although Ollivia did not have the element of control in her dancing, she was observed to use her body freely and did not seem limited by her ability in this way. Both Tiffanie and Raye kept their movements smaller and closer to their bodies, remaining more stationary and less extended.

Through my own experiences as a dancer, from my knowledge of the literature and through my observations, my questions to the girls about space were framed in two distinct ways: as a function of their ability and as their sense of their moving bodies. Taking account of their ability represents the knowledge of the body to engage with the space around it through movement. Their sense of their moving bodies is a function of their ability. In this way, a body not practiced or comfortable with movement may feel awkward and uncoordinated. This specifically relates to the experiences the girls have had as active females and in dance and if those experiences have allowed them to feel confidence in their moving bodies.

I asked the girls to describe their experiences of what they found easy and what they found difficult in the program. Ollivia indicated that she would "just watch the teacher," while Tiffanie said:

> Well, you do have to be coordinated. But with Hip Hop, [comparing with ballet] it's pretty easy moves, nothing that you can't learn in a couple of days of practice or something.

Raye and Laney both talked about practicing at home in front of their mirrors, and Carmen and I agreed that they were the two strongest dancers in the group. From the above statement and through Ollivia's indication that she did not find anything challenging in the program, it is clear that in this group, ability as perceived by the girls, did not always match evaluations by Carmen and myself. The assumption that greater ability relates to greater feelings of comfort or confidence will be explored in the discussion.

The girls' comfort level was documented in two ways: their physical location in the class as an indication of how comfortable they felt dancing in this particular group and their description of this aspect of the experience. All of the girls' skills improved as the sessions progressed, but this did not translate into a significant change in the amount of space that they occupied as they moved their bodies. Generally speaking, the girls' comfort level, both with each other and with me as an observer and outsider, was observed and verbally indicated to increase over time. The four girls generally maintained their same location within the group throughout the program. Raye and Laney would situate themselves in the front row, Ollivia would alternate standing in the front and second rows, and Tiffanie would place herself as close to the middle of the group as possible. Carmen would shuffle the rows a couple of times each session, but when given the chance the girls would choose their same spots. In this case, although the girls' skills were observed to improve, this was not a significant factor in their decision of where to place themselves. Perhaps a stronger influence was that their abilities remained approximately the same in relation to one another. For example, Tiffanie's skills may have progressed from when she started, but not at a rate beyond the rest of the group. Thus, her personal progression did not allow her to overcome the place where she felt comfortable within the group.

The perceptions I had of the girls' use of space and sense of comfort has allowed me some insight into how they perceive themselves while doing Hip Hop. As I began to unravel the multiple ways they experience their bodies I reflexively kept these notions in mind.

Leadership

As the leader of the program, Carmen holds a significant amount of power over the girls' Hip Hop experience as she represents the role model, the judge and the messenger of information in this situation. This power is represented when she offers feedback or criticism, and through the control she exercises over what the class learns and the ways in which this happens. Depending on the girls' previous experiences, Carmen may also represent a female who occupies a leadership role within the physical activity context. Although in dance culture there are many female leaders, within the greater context of sport and physical activity leaders, Carmen represents the minority as this role is more commonly bestowed on males (Pellet & Harrison, 1992). In this way her power as a female role model may be even greater.

There are a few notable limitations to identifying Carmen's influence in the girls' experience in this program. How the girls explicitly or implicitly felt about Carmen as the leader of this program is one of them. Their comments were commonly heard as "I liked everything" (Raye) when asked what they thought about the program or "nothing" (Raye) when asked what they would like to see changed. I see this as a limitation, because it seems naive to think that this program was perfect. The girls' feelings towards her are intertwined with the power she holds over them as someone with authority and a possible tentativeness to speak out against her. They may have also felt a similar tentativeness to speak with me as a peer of Carmen's, and the only other older presence involved in their

Hip Hop experience. Perhaps these influences were exacerbated because they were interviewed individually and in depth on one occasion only or the environment that I created for the interviews was not conducive to this kind of sharing. The ways the girls were able to describe Carmen's role in the program, it became clear to me that her presence did have an impact on them. My bias towards Carmen may have also been evident as we spoke about her. Through my own experiences with instructors, leaders and coaches, I formed the opinion early in the program that Carmen was an excellent leader. I also hold the belief that leadership is a key factor in the experience of an activity, and partly attribute its success or failure to how it is carried out. My supportive attitude towards Carmen may have encouraged the girls to endorse her contribution to the program. For future research, multiple interviews would likely contribute to alleviating some of these problems and generally allow a better understanding of participants like these girls. Other methods like journaling about their experiences might also allow me more insight into the relationship between a program leader and the participants.

Carmen described her desire to educate the girls in Hip Hop dance and to motivate them to continue dancing or to attempt new activities. Her goal in this program was to "teach new skills and steps at the pace of the average skill level in the class." Although she recognized that there would be girls that struggled more than others, she took the position that the class would continually move forward learning new things, even though some girls may fall behind. "Perfection is not the goal of the program and focusing on the inability of a few girls will not necessarily make this experience better for them. I want the girls to learn and have fun, but mostly to keep them moving and dance! Nothing needs to be perfect." Carmen's style of leadership in this situation was an attempt to be inclusive of different abilities, to focus on fun and to build confidence in the girls and their abilities in dance.

> I think that one important thing [is] to encourage them to think that…they got it! And they get so excited. For someone to go above and beyond…for them…and say "that was great!" Then they feel a little bit special. (Carmen)
>
> For younger girls I don't really say "this is the step, you have to master it!" With them, I'd rather them get out of it that they had fun and they feel comfortable and that no one said you did it wrong and you were bad at it. Cause to think so many times people tell them, put judgement on them so often, and I think they just want someone who they can go to and who's not going to tell them what to do. Instead, it's let's just have fun; let's turn on the music; it's music you're familiar with. I just want them to know that they can do it. (Carmen)

I think this is a particularly important implication of this research. In the discussion I will elaborate on this teaching philosophy that essentially contradicts our common assumptions about skill progression and ability in physical activity.

Carmen responded to the girls in a consistent manner throughout the program. In each session she greeted them with smiles, gave them high-fives, remained excited about the activity and provided them with lots of encouragement. "I deliberately try to talk with each girl on a one-on-one basis every week. I also try to give all the girls positive feedback about their dancing." I found Carmen to be open to the ideas the girls had about Hip Hop as she listened to them and integrated their ideas into the program when possible.

> I try to let them explore a lot of different ideas and styles and let them work with different partners so they get to know everyone in the group. Also that every single person contributes to the choreography, and the best dancers don't dominate when they're in smaller groups. (Carmen)

The girls responded to Carmen in an equally respectful way as they listened when she spoke and were excited to see her each week. All four girls appeared to like her immediately, seemed happy to interact with her during the program, and spoke highly of her in the interviews. Of the four girls, Raye and Laney talked about identifying with her: "she's awesome, I like her style and she's very, umm, very good to watch" (Raye). They also spent a greater amount of time with her before and after class. Tiffanie liked taking Hip Hop from Carmen because:

> Like she was really happy. She has this big huge smile. She was beaming. You could tell that she really loved what she's doing, that she's a happy go lucky kind of person and that she's really fun. I had a lot of fun with her.

Carmen talked about the image she was trying to portray to the girls:

> I didn't want to be so intimidating that they'd be like oh gosh, I can't go talk to her. I wanted to be someone they'd think was really fun and someone they'd think was more their age. That [they] get along with [me] and talk to [me] and someone who was cool and fun and funky.

These comments are important to this research as this project strives to understand the factors of this program that impacted the girls' experiences. If Carmen's goals to be approachable and supportive of the girls were achieved and the way she conducted herself contributed to the girls' enjoyment, an analysis of leadership is important. The girls looked to her as a role model and were keen to follow her lead. This research supports an investment in quality leaders and this is an issue for future research. Carmen's impact on the experiences of the four girls will be further explored in the discussion.

Physical Capital

Social class is the defining material factor of the habitus according to Bourdieu (1984). If the very things that produce the habitus (like social class) are "the basis of the schemes of perceptions and appreciation through which they are apprehended" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 443), the analysis must include how this appeared in the data.

Through one's body, status and distinction can be read, as well as social location. These are all indications of social class.

> The body has become a more comprehensive form of *physical capital*; a possessor of power, status, and distinctive symbolic forms which is integral to the accumulation of various resources…The production of physical capital refers to the development of bodies in ways which are recognized as possessing value in social fields. (Shilling, 1993b, p. 127, emphasis in original)

There is different emphasis put on the achievement of an ideal body (as a way to accumulate physical capital) in different social fields, and one of those fields is physical activity. From the work of Bartky (1990), Bordo (1993b), Featherstone (1991) and Shilling (1993b) physical activity is illustrated as a culturally accepted way to achieve the ideal female body. How these girls view physical activity in relation to their own bodies can be seen as symbolic indications of their social class.

A limitation to understanding the girls' experiences of their social class is that the girls were not asked to speak specifically to the topic. Weaving together information based on theoretical relationships has allowed me to create a dialogue, but it is not based on an explicit conversation with the girls. Working with such complicated theory stretches my comprehension of social class so I naturally could not have expected four teen girls to understand or conceive of their bodies in these ways. Secondly, as I have based my understanding of social class for this project around the writing of Bourdieu (1984) and Shilling (1993b), I have also made the assumption that these principles are transferable to adolescents. I assumed that classed values are transmitted to the girls through their families and their family's views about physical activity. Knowing how pervasive the influence of the peer group and the media are, however, may complicate the validity of this assumption. In addition, the girls' parents were not interviewed or asked to contribute information about family income, belief systems, social habits, activity preferences or other details that may allow me a more complete analysis of the girls' social class. Lastly, the very concept of habitus is essentially unconscious as it is "experienced like anything else that is natural" (Bourdieu, 1962, p. 100). I am, therefore, restricted to identifying practices that classify particular relationships with the body from the literature. I would be dishonest to the notion of habitus to ignore the influence of social class in the lives of the four girls. For this reason I present the following analysis of physical capital as it surfaced in the data.

The girls were able to give me some insight into how they negotiate their physical capital in their respective worlds. The two ways in which the girls were able to describe themselves in relation to their physical capital were in association to their leisure time experiences and looking cool or "popular."

According to Bourdieu (1978), the principles of habitus can give us insight into the physical activity practices of certain class fractions.

> On one side, there is the *instrumental* relation to the body which the working classes express in all the practices centered on the body…which is also manifested in the choice of sports…On the other side, there is the tendency of the privileged classes to treat the body as an *end in itself*…which leads to…the appearance of the body as a perceptible configuration, the "physique," i.e. the body for others. (p. 838, original emphasis)

Raye's conception of her body portrays this *instrumental* relationship when she says:

> The body I have keeps me alive that's all I want. Keeps me alive I'm happy.
>
> Raye: Violence is just awesome…when you're in a fight you can use their moves, and when you're fighting with people you can protect yourself. People want to fight you, and you're just standing…trying to walk away; and if they hit you, you hit them back.
> Sue: Why do you need to protect yourself? What are these fights about?
> Raye: I fight, because when people are jealous of me, they think they have to fight me…

This statement gives us a unique perspective about the relationship that Raye has with her body as a means or instrument to get her through life. "All sports involving fighting" (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 838) are classified as working class expressions of an instrumental relationship with ones' body habitus.

The concepts of class as described here and in the literature review allow the girls' descriptions of their leisure time experiences to identify them as carriers of physical capital. When the girls and I chatted about what they liked to do in their spare time, what activities their families did together and what vacations they had been on, the experiences of the four girls emerged differently. Tiffanie talked at length about long yearly family vacations, weekend ski trips and family outings indicating some class privilege.

> We went to Gabriola…it's this little island in the ocean, and we had so much fun there! Then we went to Orville, our usual vacation spot. In [the] summer I go biking a lot. When I go to Orville, we stay there for a month, and we go swimming every single day. In the winter we go to Jasper. I love skiing. It's so much fun!
>
> Well, sometimes we [my family] go on walks with each other…sometimes we play a board game; we watch American Idol together, something like that, or we just talk; we do dishes…

Raye, Ollivia and Laney said they had never really been on a vacation with their families, although Raye has gone snowboarding in Jasper with friends. These three girls identified family activities like the ones described by Ollivia below indicating no class privilege:

> Sometimes we [my family] rent movies, hang out, play games, watch TV and read books and stuff.

When I asked the girls about their experiences of physical activity outside of school, Tiffanie, Ollivia and Raye indicated that their physical activities are all done through their schools or family (but were not able to provide specific examples) and not otherwise formally organized. Laney talked about taking community dance classes and was able to elaborate on her experiences as they are limited by her family's income.

> I've been dancing since I was five or six, but I never get to take classes in a studio. So I just did community dance. I did jazz and I did all of it, but it was like once a week, and it was way cheaper. My mom just tells me it's too much money for the studio stuff.

Raye indicates a similar recognition about her family's economic situation when she refers to a couple of girls who dropped out of the Hip Hop program halfway through:

> What girl would waste her money on a class that she wouldn't go to! I mean seriously!

Aside from Raye's statements that associate her experiences with an instrumental relationship with her body, the girls' responses described physical activity as "fun." They did not acknowledge participation in dieting or exercise with the goal of weight loss when I asked them these types of questions. The disciplinary ethical and aesthetic attitudes of middle class women were not apparent in the girls' attitudes about physical activity either.

The girls' physical capital can be further explained by a description of how the "popular" becomes that way. Among social classes exist variations in attitudes, perceptions, and appreciations towards social things. Class is "a generating principle of tastes, likes, and dislikes which determines choice in the form of consumer practices which constitute a lifestyle" (Laberge & Sankoff, 1988, p. 268). Dominant groups in society (the middle and upper classes) occupy the occupational and social positions that are the most influential in bestowing value on particular bodily forms and body implicating activities. "Central to the value of different forms of physical capital at any one time, though, is the ability of dominant groupings to define their bodies and lifestyle as superior, worthy of reward, and as, metaphorically and literally, the embodiment of class" (Shilling, 1993b, p. 140). As such, the bodies symbolizing the ideals of the dominant groups in society become the most popular representations.

I began to understand how the girls thought about these things when they described them to me. To Raye, trendy, preppy clothing connotes wealth and privilege, something she does not experience in her daily life. To Ollivia, clothes:

> Shouldn't mean anything, but sometimes they do. Like if someone has some really old clothes or something like that…it might mean that they're too poor to afford anything.

When Ollivia looks at a picture of a skantily clad model in a shoe advertisement, she comments that:

> I would probably say that she might be popular or snobby or something like that…her parents are rich or something.

Clearly, Ollivia and Raye are able to read physical capital as it is represented through clothing. Regardless of the accuracy of their judgements, they associate certain styles of the body with certain levels of spending and consumption patterns.

At this point I recognize that this analysis of the girls' embodiment of physical capital has been unsuccessful at investigating the girls' social class. There is no evidence in the data upon which to draw conclusions about the various positions the girls may occupy within categorizations of social class. Nevertheless, the girls were able to subtlety describe themselves and their class identifications within the social systems studied. In the data there are indications of the kinds of orientations the girls have to their bodies (as "instrumental" or "for others"), as well as their views and experiences of leisure time activities and vacations. My understanding of the access they have and their identification with certain commodities and purchasing power offers insight into their interaction with certain cultural systems where the body acquires symbolic value. This study has not been an attempt to comment on the girls' place in the political economy or to suggest the payoffs the girls may receive based on their socially classed positions. Rather, to pay respect to the importance Bourdieu gives to social class as a determinant of the habitus, I have been attempting to comment on the ways in which bodies acquire symbolic value through their socialization in the dominant cultural systems. Further discussion about how social class is read on the adolescent female body and how it plays out in their bodily experiences of physical activity would require further research. Subsequent research would need to more thoroughly investigate the family structure of the girls and the intricacies of their social class, as well as more rigorous ways of soliciting this type of information from both the families and the girls themselves.

Gender

At the soul of this research are discussions about the influence of gender and the cultural importance placed on femininity. Gender is the primary symbolic determinant of the habitus according to Bourdieu (2001), so how these four girls articulate their own notions of themselves as females and how they negotiate the continuums of femininity and masculinity is telling. In our society, ideals and beliefs considered to be supportive of traditional notions of femininity and masculinity are those that bind men and women to the socially constructed gender dichotomy. Of course, these notions are politically, ethnically and racially based on white North American society. Implicit in these norms is the belief that men are not to act out in "feminine" ways, and women are not to act out in "masculine" ways. The gender dichotomy, which is an oppressive assumption constraining both girls and women, positions "feminine" things as inferior to "masculine" things (Bartky, 1990; Bordo, 1993b; & Young, 1990). The girls' responses both support and reject traditional notions of femininity and masculinity (sometimes simultaneously) giving us an indication of the complicated ways that gender plays out in the lives of teen girls.

Discussions of gender are prone to traditional categorizations through assumptions implicit in the feminine/masculine binary. This research strives to understand gender as a collection of "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics, that do not inherently belong to males or females, located along a continuum. A limitation to achieving this is my own experience in a society that situates men and women along opposite gender lines, my education in that society and my own femaleness. In a need to make sense of the conversations I had with the girls, I noticed my own tendency to establish a dichotomous way of describing and analysing their responses. This speaks to the normalising influences of our society's idealised femininity and masculinity even for someone who seeks to analyse this assumption critically.

One of the things the girls talked about that signified support for traditional gender notions included their acceptance of the messages in teen magazines. These magazines generally promote ultra-feminine clothing choices as the only appropriate option if one wants to be viewed as female, and subsequently that the female body is an object to be gazed upon (Currie, 1999). For Tiffanie and Raye, their dressing, hair and make-up routines are examples of the ways in which they practice traditional femininity.

> I kind of like to primp, and I like to try new styles out with my hair. My hair…that's probably one of my best features…another one of my best features is my lips probably, cause they're full, and like I know my grandma tries to make hers full. (Tiffanie)
>
> So before I leave for school, I sit on the end of my bed and make sure my hair's all nice and put on sparkles, cause that's all [the make-up] I'm allowed to wear. (Tiffanie)
>
> Does this fit with my clothes? If I'm doing my make-up, does this make-up fit with my clothes or does this eye shadow? That's what I think about in the morning. (Raye)

Ollivia talked about having "short, really short hair for a…for a girl," telling us that perhaps short hair is not a typical choice for girls in her experience. Raye's comments on being a tomboy also help us to understand that, for her certain ways of dressing and acting are more or less associated with being a girl.

> I'm a tomboy. I like skateboarding, wearing baggy pants and baggy clothes. I wear guys clothes sometimes. The pants I'm wearing right now are guys clothes. I just act more like a guy than a girl would. Like a real lady would act all nice and pinky, and everything like that's totally crap!

For Laney, her clothing choices are more about being an individual than being seen as "girly":

> I don't care what some model, who gets in the little tight outfits who's like 'look at me!', is wearing. I'm not that kind of girl. I don't feel like me in those clothes, and they look stupid. I don't want to look like everyone else.

The ways the girls conveyed their ability to resist traditional notions of femininity and masculinity were as opposition to authority and as a statement of their individuality. This "authority" could be argued to include the feminine norms that rule the clothing and beauty industries which are reaffirmed through the media. Ollivia speaks about fashion as an important consideration when she chooses her clothes, but says "probably, just baggy or comfortable stuff" when asked what she usually dresses in. As will be discussed shortly, Ollivia is restricted to the clothes that her mom picks out for her and does not make the majority of the decisions about her wardrobe.

As Tiffanie described, she wears different things on different days to express different parts of her personality and how she is feeling. She reads others' images as though they are participating in the same sorts of self-expression.

> Like kind of what Raye wears, like that thing with the pins in it (referring to a homemade armband that Raye had made for herself). I think she's just trying to say 'hey, I've gone through some tough times, and I'm not afraid to tough it out.' That's why she puts up the barrier of clothing.

Laney talks about her first impressions of people and how their public image becomes important for evaluation.

> Let's say someone looks really different, and she's got a cool outfit on and wacky hair and looks I don't know…different. You might think she was cool just because she's original!

I asked all the girls the following question: "What do you think that clothes say about someone?"

> It depends what they're wearing…. I can see some preppy person come up to me and say, "oh you think you're all that just because you're all tough and everything." (Raye)

She goes on to say:

> I'm a tomboy. I like skateboarding, wearing baggy pants and baggy clothes. I wear guys clothes sometimes…I just act more like a guy sometimes.

The girls' comments are important as evidence that these girls are involved in forming opinions about other girls and women based on stereotypical symbols of femininity and masculinity. They also provide us with some insight into how they do not view all feminine things negatively or masculine things positively.

In my quest to understand how these girls understand themselves as gendered, Raye presents an interesting case to focus on. She has recently secured a small modeling contract, and thus is participating in a sub-culture that forcefully restricts the female form to rigid ideals. She fits some of the criteria that are commonly associated with models, as she is both slim and pretty. Raye is, however, barely five feet two inches tall. Her description of herself as a tomboy, a skater, a punk, an athlete, and a model leave me with many questions about how she negotiates these different aspects of her identity. I asked her to explain what it is like to be involved in modeling and how this affects the ways she sees herself as a tomboy.

> Raye: Well, when I'm not around modeling I'm like, myself…and when I'm in modeling I'm like why am I here? But I do like the attention and want to be famous.
> Sue: So there's different aspects to your personality?
> Raye: They try to change my personality, but that will never happen!
> Sue: So there are different times when you play different roles?
> Raye: Yeah

Due to her affinity to be in the spotlight, Raye puts up with some of the things that her modeling agency asks of her, yet personally battles with these restrictions.

> In modeling they want me to be super skinny. They want me to be all this, but I'm not! And I don't want to be that and I already told them that, and I said 'I'm not going to be what you want me to be. I'm going to be who I am. I'm going to show the people that models can be like anyone else. You don't have to be skinny to be a model' and they're like, 'well that's not true,' and I'm like, 'well it should be true!'

As we talked about the pressures that her modeling agency puts on her, I asked her how *she* feels about her body as it is right now. She replied that "It's perfect!" As we continued to talk about her feelings about her body she went on to say:

> I worry a lot: I don't know why, I just do! And if my hips [get bigger], I [will] worry even more!

From this conversation we can clearly see how Raye is constantly battling with the pressure from her modeling agency, society's messages about the female body and her conceptions about her body. Her opinions seem complicated and confused by her desire to be famous. It seems as though she experiences her femininity in both positive and negative ways, depending on the environment she is in and which gaze falls on her.

My conversations with the girls gave me insight into the ways that they see themselves as females. Through Raye's modeling experiences she enjoys the "attention" or validation she receives when people react to her body. This is clearly an end-in-itself relationship to the body as object. The concept Raye has of her body is variable and dependant on the social field in which she finds herself. Her negotiation with the norms of femininity is complicated as she likes make-up, considers herself a tomboy, has a modeling contract and likes sports. Her words allowed me to understand that she enacts feminine norms when they are beneficial to her and relaxes into a less "feminine" self in her everyday life. Laney's experiences signify a more consistent interpretation of her gendered body as she is less concerned about meeting the approval of the masses and more concerned about expressing herself in a unique way. Her description of wanting to look different from other girls may show a conscious effort to disrupt mainstream patterns of femininity. Ollivia's contradictory statements about placing importance on what clothes look like but wearing what is comfortable make sense when the influence of her mother is taken into account. At thirteen, Ollivia's mother forcefully regulates her appearance. Of the four girls, Tiffanie's descriptions of herself are the most stereotypically feminine. She eagerly waits for the day she is allowed to wear more make-up and takes the most time preparing her appearance. Her words convey her enjoyment in the body ornamentation process. As this analysis delves into the girls' sense of self and sense of self as an active female, how they enact gender norms is important to an understanding of their choices, participation and experience.

Self

In order to understand how teenage girls see themselves in the world, what self means to these girls in particular will help us to understand their perceptions. Adolescence is the time in our lives when identity becomes important, and the search for the self is prioritized (Muuss, 1996, pp. 42-57). From developmental stage theorists like Erikson (1950) and Marcia (1980), the importance that identity development plays throughout this time is emphasized. The "identity achieved" status is the goal of adolescence, and it implies that a period of exploration, followed by a personal commitment to certain ideas and beliefs, occurs (Muuss, 1996). Two aspects of this theory that pertain specifically to the search for self are "individuation" and "social relatedness." Individuation refers to the need to separate the self from others leading to a sense of agency and autonomy. Social relatedness refers to group identification, developing a relationship with others and situating oneself within a particular part of the social world (Shaw, Kleiber & Caldwell, 1995).

The idea of self and the development of self are life-long processes which constantly undergo change throughout our lives. This analysis would be remiss not to mention that the teen girls in this study are only beginning to understand the world around them and how they would like to situate themselves in it. For this project, the specific and isolated contexts in which the girls were questioned about their search for self limit understanding them within those particular situations.

Through our conversations, the girls' descriptions of themselves took on three general terms of reference: their image, their parents and their friends. Image seemed to be composed of their appearance and the ways in which they would like to be recognized. As discussed earlier in this section, visual images and the meanings that accompany them have a pervasive influence in society. For the girls to absorb the notion that their image is a reflection of their self is unsurprising. In the following conversations, Tiffanie and Raye describe their appearance as purposeful expressions of their self.

> Sue: Right, so you think [your appearance] is an expression of other things. What are you trying to express with your clothes?
> Tiffanie: My clothes? Well I wear a lot of different stuff…sometimes I wear kind of glamorous stuff, more elegant, and that's the kind of the pampering part of me, kind of the princess…glamorous part. Then, like what I'm wearing today is kind of just casual. Just, you know, chillin…the easy-going part of me.
>
> Raye: She's awesome, her her her…I want to look like that… I like her make-up, [my] hair is going to be like [hers]. She's like gothic punk! She's like awesome! (referring to a magazine spread of the girl pop-punk band Lillix)
> Sue: So what does it mean that she's gothic punk? What does that mean to you?
> Raye: Umm, people who wear lip rings and nose rings, well not necessarily, not everyone who wears a nose ring is goth or punk…her make-up, her hair…her clothes, her [facial] expression.

The girls' sense of their parents represents the level of control their parents maintain over them and the freedom they are given to make decisions. The level of parental involvement in their everyday lives was inversely related to the girls' sense of power and independence. Here is where the preferences and desires of the girls became a compromise with (generally) their mothers. Although the girls' held strong opinions about the clothing they liked to wear, their mother's authority could overrule these wants. The following are examples of the decisions made by parents that control the clothing the girls are able to wear.

> Sue: Do you make your own decisions in terms of the clothes you wear?
> Ollivia: [My mom] picks them out. I try them on.

She also talks about her frustration with her mom about not letting her grow her fingernails.

> I keep trying to grow them, and she keeps cutting them off.

Tiffanie's mom is very involved in the choices she makes:

> Tiffanie: She doesn't let me buy anything! Really! Nothing skin bearing. It has to be appropriate; definitely, nothing too low…
> Sue: So what's appropriate?
> Tiffanie: Nothing really low cut in the neck, nothing above the waist. [that shows skin]
>
> Raye: I have friends like that, that wear that stuff. (commenting on a picture of a scantily clad model) Yeah, their parents don't care.
> Tiffanie: My parents are really involved in my life, and if I ever bought something like that, they'd go ballistic!
> Sue: So, if you saw a girl like this walking down the street, what are your thoughts about her? Does it depend on how old she? What do you guys think?
> Tiffanie: If there was a girl let's say 16 years old, I would probably think that something went really wrong in her life, and that I don't know…
> Sue: Why would you think that?
> Tiffanie: Maybe she was out on the street, and she was a prostitute or something; that's my perception…almost half her butt is hangin' out, and if that shirt was any higher you could see her boobs!

Raye talks about having to sneak certain things into her wardrobe against the wishes of her mom who would rather her wear "dresses and not so much black."

Adolescence is a time when young people are capable of making decisions for themselves. They are able to take in various and multiple stimuli and choose the ways they would like represent themselves. These stimuli come from many sources, and in today's society, the media is responsible for the proliferation of information. The culture of North America today is one of rapid change and confusion about the future. Postindustrial societies, societies that Margaret Mead would define as "pre-figurative" (Muuss, 1996, p. 115), are those where change is tremendous from generation to generation, and the peer group is responsible for the transmission of cultural information instead of the family. Elkind's theory of egocentrism (cited in Muuss, 1996) argues that, throughout adolescence, girls are more preoccupied with the opinions of others, and that:

> Conforming to the expectations of peers helps adolescents find out how certain roles fit them. Peer group conformity can also create a new kind of dependency, so that the individual accepts the values of others too easily without really addressing the identity issue of how well they do fit her. (p. 52)

I was given some insight into how the girls' circles of friends influenced their lives as represented by the following examples.

> They keep saying, 'I don't like you doing this; I don't like you doing that! You shouldn't be a skater; you shouldn't be a punk. You should do dance and wear dresses once in awhile!'(Raye)
>
> We hang out a lot…during school, after school, on the weekends. (Raye)
>
> Read, hang with friends, shopping, stuff like that. Read, hang with friends, read. Did I mention hang with friends? Yeah, my friends are a really big part of my life. (Tiffanie)
>
> We just hang out mostly. We don't always do something. I just like talking and laughing and doing whatever. (Ollivia)
>
> "I have a couple of really good friends who I see everyday practically. We talk about everything in each other's lives. It's like weird to not hang out together." (Laney)

Without question these girls spend a lot of time with their friends. When I think back to my teen years, I can remember long phone conversations with the same friends with whom I had just spent the entire weekend. It seems that things are the same for these girls as the time they spend with their friends is an integral part of their lives.

To further explain the ways in which girls manage the image they see for themselves with the influence of parents and friends, I turn to Ollivia as a specific case. She stood out from the group, because her answers were short, and she required more prompting than the other girls did. I cannot be certain if this was because she was the youngest, or perhaps if she was still progressing through some of the developmental stages already accomplished by the older girls. Likely due to a combination of her age, my presence as an outsider and our short relationship, her responses come out of the data as more superficial and less sophisticated. Although this limits my ability to describe the ways she represented herself, she makes an important contribution to this project.

The data positions Ollivia as a girl who likely feels more comfortable in the virtual world of cyberspace than her own. I have made this assumption based on her descriptions of the virtual worlds (NeoPets, Yville) that she spends her free time interacting in. They are far more detailed than most of her other conversation.

> Yville is a town…you're a citizen of the town as soon as you join. It's a virtual online town where you go into different rooms and chat…you can have pretend boyfriends and girlfriends, buy things. You can have jobs on Yville and stuff. You can simulate marriage and everything.

Ollivia's acknowledgment that her mom picks out her clothes and enforces other rules about her appearance indicates that my inclinations about her naivete and age, could also be a consequence of an involved parent.

Ollivia was able to offer considerable insight about the effects of peer group (mis)treatment and how this has affected her views about her self. She solemnly tells me that: "right now in my school, I'm labeled a loser, and I don't know why." I then find out that her parents are recently divorced. She has recently moved to a new area of the city and attends a new school. At this new school she does not feel as though the girls in her class like her.

> Well, there's this one, one group of girls in my class, well there's different groups of girls in my class…they just clique into groups though. They really, like, don't talk to me.

This knowledge is very important to my understanding of Ollivia and may account for her lack of responsiveness to my questioning. Perhaps her current sadness overshadows her past experiences because she cannot articulate specific activities when she "hangs out with friends." It was not until later in the interview that I learned of the recent changes in her life and how they have greatly altered her interaction with her regular peer group. Ollivia's desire to be part of a peer group and her sadness about being excluded is a telling example of how girls' friendships can impact their whole lives.

To understand the bodily experiences of teen girls in physical activity first requires an awareness of the ways they know their selves. As this project has rejected the mind-body dichotomy and positioned the body *as* the self, notions of self and the important aspects of it are essential to this understanding. The influences of the girls' parents and friends have been shown to be important factors in their decision-making processes and how they spend their time. The data has also shown how the girls cultivate an image for themselves from the influences of the images in popular culture and their friends in a way that is acceptable to their parents.

Being Active

From the literature review (Currie, 1999; Ennis, 1995; Kirk & Claxton, 2000; Olafson, Sparkes, 1997; Williams, Bedward & Woodhouse, 2000; Wright, 1996), we know that the majority of findings relating to girls' perceptions of themselves in physical activity leave room for alternative experiences and improvements to the opportunities that currently exist. To understand more fully the girls' experiences of their bodies in the Hip Hop class, I first needed to question them about their views on physical activity in general. The girls' past experiences in physical activity have contributed to the body habitus they occupy. Thus, an individual privy to experiencing physical activity in a positive way is more likely to feel comfortable making a choice to experience physical activity again. Conversely, "without violence, art, or argument" (Boudieu, 1990b, p. 445), individuals are likely to exclude choices that will be negatively sanctioned based on their relationship with the structures and characteristics of their own experience. To get a sense of the girls' relationship with their active bodies I asked them to describe the active experiences they have had, their views of those experiences and what the experiences meant to them.

Having had a lifetime of positive experiences in physical activity and sport, I am sure that my positive feelings towards physical activity have biased the ways I questioned the girls about their experiences, and the ways I interpreted their responses. Consequently, as the goal of this project is to contribute to the literature in the hope of improving girls' physical activity experiences, I wanted to find their experiences in this program positive. I am able to recognize that I have a fundamental respect and appreciation for people who pursue active lives and those who provide these opportunities. I would not be involved in this project if I did not think that being active can be an enriching experience and a way to identify with one's body positively. My intent is to acknowledge my bias and account for how it influenced the production of the data and analysis.

The girls involved in this study participate in physical activity through their school PE programs, but are not otherwise regularly involved in structured ways of being active. Being active for these girls represents many different things such as these traditional PE sport experiences, swimming with their friends, dancing in front of their bedroom mirrors and walks with their families. For this sample of teen girls, being active exists on a continuum between skill-based competitive activities and activities where they learn at their own pace and are primarily for fun. For this group, where an activity sits on the continuum has the most influence over their level of enjoyment. From the following three examples, Tiffanie, Ollivia and Raye *like* participating in physical activity.

> I like doing so much stuff, like I like rock climbing and stuff like that; almost anything. In [the] summer time I go biking a lot…we go swimming…anything that's fun. (Tiffanie)
>
> There's so much here. Singing, dancing…playing basketball, and I do cheerleading. I love snowboarding! Tennis, basically any sport…(Raye)
>
> I like [activities] that are games to play like Dr. Dodgeball, basketball and stuff like that. (Ollivia)

What is not clear from our conversations are the specific reasons why the girls do not participate in physical activity more regularly. This being said, the girls gave me no indication that they felt they should be more active or that physical activity was important to them. When I spoke to Laney about her experiences, she sounded uninterested. In comparison with some of our other conversations, she had little to say that did not include dancing. "I don't know, I guess I just go [to PE] and do whatever. It's really not that exciting" (Laney). When I asked her to explain why "it's not that exciting," she responded: "I'm not sure; it just is" (Laney). According to the girls, learning new things, improving the skills they already have, having fun and being able to socialize with their friends are key factors in their enjoyment of an activity. I will explore the implications of the girls' descriptions of their physical activity experiences in the discussion.

Another major commonality to the girls' enjoyment in physical activity was the absence of boys. They talked about enjoying playing with girls-only, because they were able to participate more, were less self-conscious about their ability and were less likely to get hurt. Our conversations were focused on their experiences in PE, with their friends and with their families. Here are some of the things the girls said.

> Well I like all girls soccer the best, because playing any kind of sports with boys usually… they're too aggressive. They're just like, they hurt us, okay, that's scary. I see my life flash before my eyes. (Tiffanie)
>
> Tiffanie: There's a uni-hockey team, and I'm not on it 'cause…it clashed with my drama club, and I didn't really want to be in it anyway 'cause it's with boys. They're too rough, and they're ball hogs, and they're glory hogs, and I'm like 'I'm open, I'm right beside you, what do I have to do?'
> Ollivia: Totally, it's like that at my school too.
> Raye: Yeah…I'd rather play with just girls…

In the same way that Laney was unresponsive to my questions about her PE experiences, she reacted in the same way to these inquiries. These statements support previous findings that advocate girls-only activity environments for the same reasons the girls gave: they are able to participate more, they feel less intimidated and they do not feel physically threatened.

Although Raye agreed with the group that she would rather not play with aggressive boys, she describes herself as physically aggressive in a sport-like activity environment. Raye's description of her experiences in sport as aggressive was interpreted as a process through which she releases tension and emotion in a physical form.

> I'm good at hockey and soccer. I body-check people, then I feel less, umm, angry...and I don't get in trouble from anyone.

The fun the girls' had during the Hip Hop sessions emerged from the data as the most important factor of the experience.

> Ollivia; It's just fun, and it's just different. I'm not really thinking about anything but umm having fun.
> Sue: What particular things did you learn about in the Hip Hop class?
> Ollivia: Hip Hop stuff, but it was just for fun. I think the whole point was just to have fun. We just played.
> Sue: Was there any part of the Hip Hop program that you didn't like?
> Ollivia: There was nothing that I didn't like…I liked it all.
>
> Sue: What did you like about this program?
> Raye: Awesome! I loved it!
> Sue: What did you love about it?
> Raye: Everything. It's so fun! There's not one thing I didn't like about it.
>
> Sue: What did you like about this program?
> Tiffanie: It was really good. It was interesting to see the different moves and well, how, like, everyone perceives Hip Hop in a different way…I thought it was really fun too.
>
> Sue: What kinds of things did you learn about in this program?
> Laney: I learned more moves for sure, umm, that we all can do it our own way, and there's lots of different kinds of Hip Hop. I really liked making up little dances with the other girls. I learned some stuff there too…I have a lot fun making up dances with my friends, and it was fun here too.

From this analysis, I have reason to believe that these girls approach certain physical activities with good attitudes. When the conditions are "right" physical activity can be something they enjoy doing. In this way Laney bases her enjoyment in dance while Raye seems to like just about anything. While Ollivia and Tiffanie prefer to do things without boys, they do not have a specific activity preference. As I began to question the girls about their bodily experiences in the Hip Hop program I was able to keep their views about physical activity close at hand. Being mindful of the perceptions they had about activity, I was able to use this knowledge as I inquired about their sense of their bodies while being active.

Bodily Experience

Understanding how these four teen girls experienced their bodies in the Hip Hop program is particularly important as a means to contribute insight through this project. As the research with adult women has begun to indicate, positive bodily experiences in an active context can produce feelings of freedom, release from stress and new bodily perceptions (Castelnuovo & Guthrie, 1998; McDermott, 2000; Wright & Dewer, 1997). If the concept of habitus is used to represent the embodiment of "political mythology…[as] a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby feeling and thinking" (Hoy, 1999, p. 7), it surely *is* bodily experience. The second goal of this project is to inquire if positive bodily experiences through physical activity can produce new body perceptions that allow girls access to new (feelings) and/or ways of accepting and viewing themselves and their bodies. Thus, can bodily experiences shift one's habitus to recognize and seek out more of these feelings? During our conversations, I strongly encouraged all of the girls to elaborate on the kinds of feelings they had when they were dancing, the emotions they felt, what they thought they looked like, what was on their mind, and how their bodies felt to them. Through this process, our dialogue began to characterize their bodily experience in the following four ways: through feelings of competence, creativity, expression and freedom.

Competence in this context refers to one's ability to know the body and its movements, to know that the body can and should be moved in ways that feel good and to feel as though one was the originator of those movements. This idea is based on Bartky (1990) and Young's (1990) notions that females are socialized into gendered bodies that are restricted from fully experiencing their physicality. These bodies "take herself [*sic*] to be the *object* of the motion rather than its originator" (Young, 1990, p. 267, original emphasis). This idea can express bodily feelings like being out of control and being uncertain of one's body's capacities. As the girls and I talked about the program I was trying to understand the sense they had of their moving bodies. Laney expressed her feelings of competence in this manner:

> I think it's just a certain type of energy. You kind of feel electric. It feels right…it feels like it's something that you should be doing…I feel happy…I don't really think about it. I just do it. It's weird…it's something in your body that just clicks.

All four girls indicated that they felt comfortable with their ability to perform Hip Hop. When I asked them to explain how they became comfortable with the steps, they had varying responses.

> I just watch the teacher. (Ollivia)

> You have to be coordinated. That's a big part of it. And you like have to do one arm at a time. (Tiffanie)

> I practice everyday until I get that one step right, and then I'll move on to the next. When I feel comfortable and maybe when someone says good job. (Raye)

Carmen offered the following comment about the stability of a group like this and how being a part of it may influence the girls' confidence.

> I think too, when they can find their niche and can find something that they're a part of, like every Thursday they have something to go to and be with the same group of people. It helps make them comfortable. I think they believe in themselves 'cause they know that they're good at something.

Comfort as described here (and earlier in an previous section) provides one way of analysing the girls' acquired feelings of competence in their moving bodies. The encouragement they received from Carmen to experiment with the movements also contributed to the ways they were able to feel in control of their bodies.

Many physical activities and sports have rules governing how they should be played or executed, and allow little room for creativity. All four girls described their experiences in the Hip Hop program as inclusive and supportive of their own creativity. They spoke about this idea as a function of trying new things and of developing a personal style. Carmen talked about the value of letting students be creative and not imposing a rigid learning structure on them.

> I think that the minute that you tell kids that they have to do it the same…they lose. They're worried too much about what you're doing and how you're doing it…they want to be like you. But if you tell them [to] do it using your own style, then they find their own unique self in what they're doing, and I don't think they stress about it. That makes it more fun, 'cause they're like okay…you can do it that way, but I can do it this way.

The girls and I had conversations about the particular things they liked about this program, and a consistent response was their appreciation of being given the opportunity to be creative and experiment with the movements.

> I took ballet for a little while, but I hated it! 'Cause you had to wear the uniform and you had to have the tights on, and I [didn't] want to wear that. Then, I'm like I should be doing something that no one's going to say is right or wrong, 'cause [in Hip Hop] there are certain steps that are common, but no one says…if you don't wear [specific clothing] then you can't be a part of our class. There's no judgement. No one [told] me what I have to wear. I could just do whatever I wanted…I think that's why I love Hip Hop so much. (Laney)
>
> You can just do whatever you want. There's nothing that you have to or can't do; it's very creative. (Tiffanie)

> It's kind of individual. You can do it at your own pace, add your own flavour you know… any [part] of the dance, you just do it your way. We can add to it, and so we can create our own unique style; maybe add some stuff that you think is cool. (Ollivia)
>
> I finally took a [Hip Hop] class and went 'that was so different!' It's more like your own style, and basically my own style would be probably Hip Hop, but everyone can make it [their] own. I mix up everything I've learned from the areas [of dance] and from everything I see on TV. I mix everything up and then I try to add my own movements, or like if [Carmen] does a crimp walk, I'll do a slide and turn, then a crimp walk. (Raye)

Introducing creativity as a dimension of physical activity for teen girls is valuable. By allowing the girls to experiment with the movements, Carmen gave them the power to establish their own standards and participate in designing their bodily experience.

The portrayal of emotion, feelings or a story through movement is how bodily expression is defined here. In this context it also means doing this in ways that feel good. Having discussed the role of competence and creativity in the girls' experiences of this program, the expression of these elements through movement is inclusive of them. Whether it was the music, their pent-up anger or an aspect of their personality, the girls were able to articulate how this aspect of the program experience affected them.

> When I dance I feel good, but not like I usually feel. When I dance I kind of feel like I have a bit of attitude, like I'm tough. I feel like I can show what I'm feeling. (Tiffanie)
>
> Self-expression and performing…when I dance I feel good about what I do. I feel like nothing else in the world matters, and I think people laugh at me 'cause I'm a very smiley dancer. I like making people smile, and I like the reaction I get when someone's watching me, and I'm excited. (Laney)
>
> Hip Hop is a way of expressing yourself with the music…It's all about being yourself, about having your own individual style…that is totally you. (Tiffanie)

Activity is often looked at as a way to release stress and excess energy and appears to have offered that very opportunity to Raye. A continuation of this analysis appeared in the girls' words as they talked about the feelings of freedom they experienced.

Feelings of freedom, like those indicated by Raye above, struck me in a dramatic way all through the conversations I had with the girls. These girls, though in different ways, were able to forget about the stresses in their lives, find opportunities to relax and avoid their parents, teachers and other disciplinary figures by participating in the Hip Hop program.

> When I'm in the class I feel more loved. I feel better than anywhere else I [am], that's for sure. I feel hyper, excited and everything...I feel like I'm not in the real world. I feel like I'm in a dream! 'Cause my life is very confusing right now...I'm going through a lot of rough times right now, and when I came into Hip Hop I'm like, 'this is a dream! It can't be real!' (Raye)

> I'm just blank, my mind leaves everything [else], and I don't think of anything. Even though I can't dance as much as I wish I could I'm never going to stop. It makes me feel like I can do anything! I've decided I'm never going to stop dancing....dancing makes me feel like things are possible. (Laney)

Ollivia did not talk about freedom in this sense. When I asked her what she thought about when she was in the program sessions, she responded by saying "nothing really, it's just fun." She also indicated that she did not feel that she was being watched by the other girls, self-conscious or uncomfortable at any time. From interview segments and from my observations of the openness in her movements style, I would argue that she felt free to dance in her own way.

Tiffanie talked about trying to remember the next step as she danced, but:

> I didn't worry about it too much 'cause, really, there was nothing that we weren't supposed do in the class. That was the whole point, to do what you want and in your own way.

The multiple ways the girls described freedom included: as a break from reality, as creative license and as a reprieve from thinking. These girls' experiences do not comply with Young's (1990) notion of a feminine existence in that: "she must divide her time between the task to be performed and the body that must by coaxed and manipulated in performing it" (p. 267). This implication and the possible ways this knowledge can inform our physical activity practices are very important to this project and will be included in the discussion.

From my perspective, the girls' experiences of their bodies are directly related to the environment Carmen created in the Hip Hop sessions. Their bodily experiences can be described as outcomes of their feelings of competence, creativity, expression and freedom as a result of the particular conditions of this program. From my observations, my conversations with the girls, and with Carmen herself, it became very clear that this atmosphere was not accidental or a product of the activity itself. I will explore this in the discussion as a pivotal component of the girls' experience.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

To orient this discussion purposefully, I remind the reader of the original intent of this project. My question inquires into the meanings of participation in a non-competitive, alternative physical activity. To be more specific, what was the bodily experience of teenage girls participating in an eight-week Hip Hop program, and how does this contribute to an understanding of how teen girls experience their bodies in physical activity? In the previous chapter I provided evidence of some initial connections between the girls' experiences of the Hip Hop program and the literature. In this chapter I show how the notion of habitus can be integrated into an understanding of the bodily experiences of teen girls and the implications for this project.

Bourdieu (1990a) stipulates that in modernity different classes develop distinctive orientations to the body, which are connected to the various meanings given to the body in different social fields. One important feature of social class that relates to this project is the relationship the girls have with their (classed) bodies in the field of physical activity. The attitudes, perceptions and expectations the girls have about physical activity are shaped by their social class, which include the views they hold about their own bodies, their active bodies, and their awareness of the meanings of being active (Bourdieu, 1984). For this investigation, data was collected and analysed relating to symbolic representations of class as seen through the more tangible concept of physical capital: "the production of physical capital refers to the development of bodies in ways which are recognized as possessing value in social fields" (Shilling, 1993b, p. 127). Using Shilling's notion of physical capital as *embodied*, as explained in the literature review, it is possible to discuss social class in both the explicit and implicit ways the data supports this. One's "second nature," that *is* habitus, guides many of our choices and shapes our experiences as they become embodied. Within the context of physical activity, representations of class (gender, race and ethnicity, etc.) become inscribed on the body and are enacted through one's orientation to both activity and the active self.

This discussion does not intend to comment on the class backgrounds of the girls nor conclude how this will play out in their lives. Instead, it speaks to the ways in which the data symbolically represent class identifications in the social systems in which the girls live. The data collected account for more detailed representations of gender with more subtle inflections of social class. Although there were a few more-explicit ways the girls articulated representations of social class, implicit relationships between these representations and larger social systems have also allowed me some insight into how they experience their classed habitus.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the ways in which the data was used to describe the girls in relation to their physical capital were through their leisure time experiences, the ways they defined looking cool and popular, and their knowledge of consumer culture. The responses of Ollivia, Laney and Tiffanie do not fit either a working class orientation to the body as instrumental or a middle class orientation to the body as a body-for-others. These girls' descriptions of their relationship with their bodies leads me to believe that they neither commit great time or energy to developing their bodies as objects for the perceptions of others, nor as mechanisms for survival. Their perceptions of themselves within the context of physical activity is related to the experience itself rather than to a future objective. Raye's bodily experiences on the other hand represent two separate orientations to the body, which both resisted and reproduced dominant representations of gender. She was able to describe some of her bodily experiences both within physical activity and outside of it as opportunities to use her physical body as an instrument in an aggressive way, clearly resisting dominant notions of femininity. Conversely, her experience of her body within the subculture of modeling, a clearly feminine gendered practice, can only be analysed as the body-for-others. She seems to be able to negotiate between these views based on the situation she finds herself in and the expectations otherwise required. Suggestively, this speaks to the fluidity with which symbolic representations of class and gender are embodied.

Also emerging from the data was the girls' desire to look cool and be popular. This can be understood by thinking back to the previous discussion regarding the influences of popular culture in establishing normalized images of the female body. This understanding can be incorporated into how the dominant (middle and upper) classes influence which bodily orientations and ways of adorning the body are made popular. The integration of these ideas allow for a clearer picture of how what is dominant can become popular or normalized. The girls accessibility to commodities made essential to create the popular images we have discussed is of importance to this research. Through modes of mass production, commodities made popular are also made accessible to the lower classes as they become affordable and widely distributed in discounted forms. These processes encourage the belief that the ideal is attainable at a fraction of the cost that is attainable for everyone.

A discussion of the ways in which social class and physical capital hold important implications for this study allow a fuller understanding of how these girls view their bodies and cultivate their image. The concept of habitus fulfills its obligation to provide us with an understanding of bodily experience as it includes the ways our material existence shape and guide our orientation to the body. As mentioned earlier, the data itself, along with the ways in which it has been collected, analysed and interpreted, retain a strong focus on representations of gender. Throughout the rest of the discussion consideration will also be given to examining symbolic representations of social class, in conjunction with a gender analysis, to provide a more thorough interpretation of the girls' experiences of their habitus. In this way assumptions of gender and class along with other social constructions within cultural systems can be seen to enact themselves on and through the body.

To remain true to a feminist sociological understanding of the female body that informs the epistemological position of this thesis, requires investigating how the habitus is gendered. In 2001, Bourdieu acknowledged the inseparability of gender from habitus as an appropriation of masculinity and femininity and as the primary *symbolic* determinant of the dispositions of the body. I now discuss the multiple ways that the girls experienced their habitus as gendered and what this means to the project.

After describing the ways in which gender lays the foundation for the rest of the discussion, I will investigate the implications of space and comfort, leadership, conceptions of self and experiences of being active. Bodily experience is the final section in this chapter and is discussed as the way dispositions of the body are acquired within the context of physical activity, and how the habitus can be implicated to accept new ways of orienting itself through activity.

Gender

As I have taken a feminist approach to this study, it is important to weave together feminist notions of how dominant conceptions of gender can be oppressive to girls and women, and Bourdieu's (1990b) acknowledgment of gender as the primary symbolic determinant of habitus. In this way, an understanding of habitus as a system of durable, yet malleable, dispositions which generate and organize our daily operations and practices must be seen as gendered. In a patriarchal society, stereotypical notions of gender are used as a means to justify the oppression of girls and women, and are used to explain the ways that this implicates a gendered experience of the body by theorists like Bordo (1993b), Bartky (1990) and Young (1990).

Feminist theorists would like to reconstitute notions of gender to be more inclusive of the array of characteristics an individual can possess and based less on an individual's portrayal of "femininity" or "masculinity." The dichotomous classification of characteristics as either feminine or masculine, in conjunction with the positioning of the former as inferior to the latter, is oppressive to girls and women. This investigation is important for adolescent girls growing up in a society where they are required to enact traditional norms of femininity, accept these ideals to be perceived as appropriately female and simultaneously reject that their own femininity may be seen as inferior.

The dominant meanings behind images of girls and women in the discourses of popular culture are strongly supportive of emphasized femininity (Connell, 1993) and the youthful and beautiful body. These gendered messages are so pervasive and so normalizing in our society that some girls and women begin to relate with these ideals as if they were their own. Foucault's "docile body" thesis explains how, through cultural mechanisms of surveillance and control, individuals become subject to a permanent visibility or "gaze," maintaining a heightened self-consciousness for individuals, especially females (Bartky, 1990). In modern society individuals become their own monitors and disciplinarians and subject themselves to dominant disciplines of bodily control (Foucault, 1984). Through Foucault's theory of how power operates to regulate social bodies, social ideals and norms are influential in the lives of teen girls. Feminists, like Markula (2001), have used Foucault's notions of discipline and power to understand how females construct meanings for their own bodies from the ideals depicted in magazines and on billboards. She also gives insight into how these processes work through obsessions with diet and exercise, and how females view these practices.

Using both Foucault's (1984) notion of the docile body and Bourdieu's (1990a) notion of habitus, the dominant, normalized, and unattainable, ideal female body becomes an unconscious goal or benchmark from which to evaluate one's own body. The prevalence of visual images portraying the female body in this idealistic light represent the media's influence in the education of teen girls about how their bodies are to act, what they are to look like and how the rewards of such attainment will appear. For this project, it is important to understand that some girls look at images of popular young celebrities as their role models and are led to believe that through stringent diet and exercise practices they can embody a similar image. Some of these ideas were evident in the girls' reactions and statements about the images of girls and women we looked at in the magazines. Implicit in this understanding are the ideas that the body is a project, is controllable, and that we are morally bound to seeing it in these ways (Shilling, 1993a). Wanting the hair of the pop star or the eyes of the model as they are depicted in the magazines is a telling way the girls' declared their desire to cultivate a certain appearance. These desires are also class based as the wealthy (celebrities) set the benchmark for what is deemed beautiful and enviable by others. As the girls in this study disclosed their perceptions and attitudes about their bodies, it showed me just how complicated the interaction between normalizing influences and their desire to be individuals are in reality.

There were several instances in the data where the intersections between gender and class were most evident. As the girls and I talked about the cultural importance of one's image, it was clear how looking "right" is linked to symbolic representations of social class. As previously mentioned, the ways in which certain images become popular are commonly through celebrities and their devoted fans, the middle and upper classes. Through the same mechanisms that afford certain images popularity and signify femininity, clothing brands, make-up and hairstyles, as well as trendy accessories acquire symbolic value and are representative to others of an individual's social class. It is telling, for example, that the girls identified more with musician Alicia Keys (as an artist and not a "skank") rather than a "street" rapper, providing evidence of Keys' middle-class appeal. This is an example of how representations of social class are evident in what images and celebrities the girls find attractive. In the lives of teen girls, possessing popular and fashionable "in" things play into how they perceive themselves and each other as richer females or poorer females. Divisions between richer and poorer can be read through the girls' clothing, the brand labels affixed to them and clothing's complex way of representing appropriations of femininity. As Ollivia speculated that the scantily clad (yet polished looking) girl in the shoe advertisement might have "rich parents" and "be a snob" I was able to see how she understood both gender and representations of class. The girls were able to articulate these kinds of things to me as they talked about window shopping for things they could not afford to buy, their recognition of those who can afford to purchase these things, and the social importance of these types of perceptions.

The girls I spoke with did not relate their own experiences in physical activity, sport or exercise to a weight loss goal or desired change in appearance. We spoke about their awareness of the number of girls and women who engage in these sorts of exercise practices, but they agreed that they do not hold these goals for themselves and do not like "exercise" enough to pursue it with this type of tenacity. In this way, they acknowledged this as a cultural phenomenon but do not take part in it themselves. From the data, conceptions of the female body, whether they have been accepted or rejected (in whole or in part), are seen as complex aspects of bodily perceptions. These findings support the power the media can exert over how females perceive their bodies. Through capitalist marketing mechanisms that ordain the body with value based on its appearance, the mass media plays a leading role in the ways that representations of social class are seen on the body.

From the data collected, the girls' perceptions of themselves as female relate to cultural conceptions of femininity. This understanding is based on their descriptions of how they dress and adorn their bodies, their judgements of these types of practices by others and their interaction with society's expectations. They are caught in the middle of a battle to accept and deny the ideal body as the "right" body in their search for self. The girls and I worked our way through parts of the magazines I brought as a process to help me understand their perceptions of the socially constructed ideal. Through these conversations, we were able to unpack some of their perceptions of the gendered female body and how it is perceived by others. Analysing the dialogue about clothing, the sexualization of the female body and the body as an object to be gazed upon, I have interpreted their experiences of their bodies to be both reproductive and resistive of gender norms.

According to Ollivia, Tiffanie, Raye and Laney, girls and women dress in certain ways to express themselves. They are quick to label the girls and women depicted in magazines (generally in stereotypical ways), but are personally offended when they feel they have been judged by appearance alone. The images that these adolescent girls are formulating for themselves are complicated representations of their individuality and their relationships with society's feminine ideals. Although their views on being perceived as female might mean that they are participating in some performances of femininity, it does not necessarily position femininity as an inferior practice. And, although they recognize that the female body is commonly an object gazed upon by others, they acknowledge the misunderstandings to which this gaze is prone.

For these girls wearing black clothing, having dark hair and make-up as well as a bad attitude were the ways they described themselves and others as acting against authority (which can include the fashion and beauty industries). I agree that non-revealing, dark, baggy clothing signifies participation in a less stereotypically feminine representation of the body. Clothing choices like these represent an accepted and somewhat common alternative in the adornment of the body to the ultra-feminine depictions of girls and women in the media.

Habitus is a symbolic force or "embodied social law" that is subject to the same patriarchal and androcentric views and principles so highly valued in our society (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 51) and is thus gendered. As Bourdieu (2001) acknowledges the influence of gender over the habitus, he also recognizes how the domination of "masculine" over "feminine" produces a feminine existence that is more physically restrained and limited in its appearance. The implication of gender for this project begins with the acknowledgement that these girls experience femininity and masculinity in multiple ways. Due to the specific pressures that exist in different environments, their adherence to gender norms becomes more or less important. This understanding must also consider the degree to which gender is embedded in the habitus as a defining and guiding feature of all subsequent perceptions. Take, for example, the way that these girls were able to identify how judgements about the character, behaviour and "nature" of an individual are made based solely on their appearance. Although they were able to identify these social patterns, they continued to make these judgements about others and cultivate their own images based on them. Consider the complex ways the four girls understand themselves as females in today's society as the rest of this chapter unfolds. Remaining faithful to the feminist backbone of this project is to make problematic the assumptions implicit of the social and gendered body. Interpretations of the girls' experiences evolve with the knowledge that they experience their female bodies in different ways at different times, and that although femininity is historically (and presently, at a social level) devalued, the girls do not always consciously experience their own femininity in this way.

Space & Comfort

Young (1990) notes that the physical limitations of the female body are not in compliance with the potential of girls' and women's bodies, and due to the constructed nature of female physicality, they are often unaware of and uninspired to test their own abilities. For Young, females are in their particular situation due to conditions of their sexist oppression in contemporary society. Generally, girls and women are not given the opportunity to use their bodies fully in free and open engagement with the world nor encouraged to do so. Girls are not encouraged to develop spatial skills through play and tinkering in the same ways as boys and are not required to use physical skills as they get older. "Young girls acquire the subtle habits of feminine bodily comportment" (Young, 1990, p. 154) through their socialization in a society that assumes their bodies are slower, weaker and more fragile. Normalized female bodies are those that do not reach beyond their comfort zone, and the habitus of many females leaves them with a feeling that they cannot, and should not, seek further knowledge. These types of knowledge can be present in many physical activity environments and is important to this discussion of the influence of space and comfort.

From the data, the girls are seen to enjoy themselves in the Hip Hop environment and engage their bodies in movement in ways that felt good to them. As a factor contributing to their enjoyment, I would be remiss not to mention that this program environment was one in which they felt comfortable to participate. As participants of varying levels of ability, it is also important to understand that being comfortable was not restricted by an individual's skill level. From my perspective, as an observer and through my conversations with the girls, many of the things that contributed to their level of comfort lead back to Carmen and how the program was executed. Her role in establishing an environment conducive to these kinds of feelings and how this was accomplished can be found in the following section on leadership.

Working with the data to best explain how the use of space plays an important role in the study of teen girls and physical activity, I will use Laney and Ollivia as examples to compare two very different dancers. Laney's skills and abilities as a dancer, her love of dancing and her ability to interact with the music, all combine to give an understanding of her experience. Her way of dancing, and thus moving, represent a level of comfort with her own body, as well as an ability to move it freely and openly. As briefly described in the results chapter, Laney is a skilled dancer who uses her whole body from the crown of her head to the tips of her toes when she dances. Because of her skill level, she is able to execute the movements to their potential and is not restricted by her body.

Watching Ollivia is a very different experience. Although she too uses her whole body as she dances, her movements are generally awkward and unpracticed looking, even at the end of the eight week program. Ollivia has not taken a dance class before and told me that she did not find this Hip Hop program challenging in any way, learned by watching and found it easy. From the viewpoint that this program was about having fun and learning new things, Ollivia was successful as she indicated that both of those things happened for her. Using her body in the ways she performed the movements brought her feelings of competence and happiness, and although she was restricted to perform them in certain ways because of her ability, this did not seem to affect her experience in a negative way.

As I sat and observed the girls I looked at the ways they used the space immediately around their bodies as they danced. I questioned the ways they moved their bodies in space to assess how freely and openly they engaged with them through dance. My findings and how they related to the girls' individual abilities surprised me. A major implication of this research is the relationship between the body's use of space through movement and an individual's ability to perform that movement. As I watched Laney dance, my conceptions of how the body becomes engaged with the space around it by extending itself through it were confirmed. She represented a skilled individual with the ability to utilize her whole body as she performed the movements. Up to this point, ability played a role in the ways that I assumed moving bodies were able to increase their use of the space around them. As an individual acquired more control and mastery over the movements they performed, I assumed that they would then be able to increase the range of those movements away from the body. This conception relates back to Young's (1990) notion that female physicalities are limited through their feminine existence. When bodies are discouraged from exploring their potential, individuals may develop a confined bodily comportment. As I watched Ollivia dance, these assumptions were questioned. In an awkward and often uncoordinated way Ollivia utilized her body in the same way that Laney did. In my experience as individuals learn new skills, their movements are tightly held to the body as they are fearful of getting in the way of others, embarrassing themselves and standing out. As Ollivia confided in me, she talked about feeling comfortable in the class and with her ability, learning skills quickly and enjoying the program in its entirety. Clearly, her skill level did not confine her ability to explore the movement.

Knowing how ability can be a variable indicator of how the girls used space and felt comfortable in this program is a significant contribution. With this knowledge I would like to offer the following recommendation. If activity can be structured in a way that allows girls to explore their bodies through movement, girls may be able to overcome the limitations of their ability. To provide opportunities that allow this kind of exploration may alleviate some of the pressure girls feel to be proficient in order to participate.

Leadership

In the lives of teen girls it is known that their hobbies and their desire to be with their friends are in direct competition with their participation in physical activity. The literature also says that if early experiences in physical activity are positive, it is more likely that participation will continue. Some of the factors contributing to teen girls' continued participation in physical activity include, having success, receiving positive role modeling, receiving positive feedback and the availability of the activity (Curtis, McTeer, & White, 1999).

The majority of the factors the girls described that contributed to their enjoyment of the experience directly related to Carmen's leadership. Carmen offered them support and made every effort to give them confidence in their ability to do Hip Hop. Through her creation of an environment in which the girls were able to experience feelings of freedom, she was able to contribute to the success of this program in the eyes of the girls. This environment was cultivated through her consistent efforts to greet the girls enthusiastically, to offer them praise, to listen to their thoughts and to refrain from singling an individual out for either their ability or inability. I would argue that this program was exceptional in this way and a good example of a safe, supportive, girl-friendly and *body*-friendly environment.

Expanding on the implications about the relationships amongst space, comfort and ability is the integration from the previous section by an activity leader. It may happen that another Hip Hop program is set up with the same intentions and under the same guidelines as this one. The girls may learn the same steps, movements and skills, yet their experience could be drastically different under the guidance of a leader with a different demeanour and sensitivity to the goals of the program. To this end I must provide specific recommendations as to what constitutes quality leadership as it relates to the bodily experiences of teen girls.

From what I have learned through this experience, several factors in instructional and pedagogical literature resonate as important. First, the leader must understand her role and influence in the program as more than an instructor but also as a role model, motivator and listener. Second she must not just recognize the need to be sensitive to different body types and abilities but to be able to treat individuals according to their specific needs. Third, as discussed in Ames (1992) and Ames & Archer (1988), individuals can be more motivated by effort in program environments that are oriented to focus on developing new skills, to improve based on one's own level of competence or skill and to attain a sense of mastery based on an internalized set of standards. This type of environment is based on the belief that effort will lead to personal progress, mastery and a sense of satisfaction. Ames' (1992) assertion that these types of environments "may provide a context that overrides the contribution of perceived ability to achievement behaviours" (p. 264) is important to recognize within the context of this project. The girls in the Hip Hop program were able to set their own standards, learn at their own pace and experience success in ways that were meaningful to them, as they were not predetermined by Carmen.

A new contribution and recommendation coming from this data and my interpretations is the idea that leaders must encourage girls to explore their bodies through movement and not limit this by enforcing the acquisition of skills. Something unique to this project was the ability to investigate a range of ability levels within such a small sample of participants and the finding that ability did not appear to restrict the girls' enjoyment of Hip Hop. I can only predict that Ollivia's feelings of competence and confidence would have been dashed if her performances of Hip Hop had been regarded as awkward and uncoordinated (and thus limited) by Carmen. As it was, although both Carmen and I agreed that Ollivia struggled to put the movements together "correctly," Ollivia was able to explore the movements of Hip Hop without restrictions. Following Young's (1990) notion that girls are not able to fully experience the physical potential of their bodies (and my own research seems to confirm this) it can be said that leadership can play a role in bringing them closer to their potential. Honouring the exploration of the body's capabilities to move in ways created by individuals could be a positive leadership strategy. This sort of evidence points to the importance of leaders and their influence over the potential for girls to have positive experiences of both the activity and their bodies.

Self

For many teen girls, the experience of adolescence and the onset of puberty are arguably intertwined with a new experience of their bodies as female bodies. "It is at the time girls experience these bodily changes and become softer and rounder that their culture tells them thin is beautiful, even imperative" (Oliver, 1999, p. 221). Along with these changes comes the desire to understand who one is as a member of society as the search for the self is prioritized. Discussions of the self have been included in order to understand perceptions of that self as they relate to how the body is experienced. This is an important concept to this project as the body is commonly seen as a vehicle for the ultimate expression of the self (Featherstone, 1991), as the relationship between the body and identity becomes increasingly close (Shilling, 1993a). These ideas are taken from the literature and contribute to the understanding of how some girls and women are socialized into understanding that their body represents the (public) display of their (private) self and how the body can be seen as a project (Shilling, 1993a). In the case of the four girls who participated in this project, they only partially acknowledged an awareness of their bodies as the 'ultimate representation of the self.' Because they were not able to recognize consciously all the factors that contribute to their perceptions of their bodies, the concept of habitus becomes a stronger means of identifying them. Through an investigation of habitus, which is both the depository of symbolic forms and the internalization of social structures, it is the embodiment of such dispositions that accounts for what is not consciously known. Perhaps, instead of discrediting what are commonly regarded as nonchalant adolescence responses like "I just like it, I don't know why," it may be useful to look at responses of this nature as embodied answers, something that the *body* knows.

The girls' articulated their perceptions of self as it related to their image, their parents, and their friends. For many teen girls, their image *is* their identity, which is fueled by a desire to distinguish oneself in unique ways (individuation) and fit into society (social relatedness) (Muuss, 1996; Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995). For this discussion, the girls' descriptions of how they make decisions about their image, as well as how they see themselves with respect to their friends and parents will be explored as a measure of their relative agency. While the girls talked about wanting certain clothes, hairstyles and accessories to produce a certain image, they described these choices as influenced by their friends and monitored by their parents. In addition to this, their interaction with consumer culture and explicit awareness of "branding" convey another way in which representations of social class can be integrated into an understanding of their experiences of their bodies.

The single most important aspect of the girls' lives, as it was conveyed to me, was their friends and the time they spent together. As Currie (1999) suggests: "The power of peers to affix labels that determine social acceptability means that girls are subject to continual assessment by their peers" (p. 244). The friendships that teen girls nurture with other girls is well documented as a driving force in their lives. These groups play a large part in image and identity development, the pressures girls are exposed to and the habits girls adapt. Girls' abilities to act outside the wishes of the group and be independent of their friends exists, but not with as much tenacity as their ability to conform (Griffiths, 1995). The four girls describe endless conversations with their friends and the desire to hangout as much as possible. The girls' ability to exercise agency with respect to their image is somewhat limited and widely varied between girls. For example, Laney's wishes to look different and be unique as compared to Tiffanie's desire to wear the "right" clothes and mimic the style and image of what is "popular." Raye's efforts to transform bargain bin finds into what she hopes will be perceived as mainstream and newly purchased, is another example of the complexity of representations of social class.

The level of control the girls' parents maintain over them is inversely related to their sense of agency. Their ability to choose clothing and activities signifies their advancement out of childhood and entry into independence. Choices about their social circle, the time they are allowed to spend with their friends and the freedom the group is collectively given are strong forces in the girls' feelings of independence in their search for self. Ollivia's story is a good example of the control parents have over the experiences of their children. Although Ollivia has begun to form ideas and preferences about the ways she wants to look, her mom closely regulates her appearance. In the case of Raye, although her peer group discourages her "tomboy" look, she continues to dress in her preferred way and can be seen as an example of her agency. Accounting for the opinions of her friends, her modeling agency, her mother and herself, Raye's situation depicts exactly how complex the negotiation of image and identity can be for adolescents. My conversation with Tiffanie allowed me to see yet another way that representations of social class play out in these girls' lives as it relates to parental involvement. Firstly, Tiffanie's implication of "sluttiness" towards females who wear tight fitting clothing illustrates the implicit association of prostitution and thus a lower class occupation and place in society. Consequently, she mentioned that girls in this type of dress may be the daughters of uncaring or uninterested parents, privileging those from (double-income, two-parent) homes like her own.

To understand the bodily experience of teen girls fully, their concept of self must be explored. The daily influence of parents, friends and the mass media in the lives of teen girls become elements of their self-perceptions. Through feedback from these same sources, attitudes become behaviours, behaviours become routines and routines become permanent dispositions embedded in the habitus. Notions of self are relevant to this project as we investigate the bodily experiences of teen girls in physical activity. These notions of self are gendered and classed as will be their perceptions of physical activity. The same obstacles that have faced some of these girls as they make decisions about their image may be involved in their decisions to become or remain active.

Being Active

As Bartky (1990) argues, identity cannot be removed from the appearance of bodies and that girls are acutely aware of how their bodies look when they are being active. The literature that focuses on the physical activity experiences of adolescent girls (e.g., Currie, 1999; Olafson, 2002; Oliver, 1999; 2001, and Oliver & Lalik, 2001) gave me a place to start this investigation and some initial questions to ask. So, how do the experiences of the girls in this study relate to those already documented in the literature?

Following our discussion about the influence of the peer group on image is the knowledge that PE classes are another site where girls are subject to intense scrutiny from their friends. Olafson (2002) and Currie (1999) stipulate that peers can exert a considerable amount of power over the active experiences of girls and that girls choose not to participate to avoid this kind of judgement. Ollivia, Raye and Laney were unable to give specific examples of times when they felt self-conscious because of their friends or classmates during experiences in PE. I sensed some reluctance to acknowledge this type of self-consciousness so our conversations may not have yielded the girls' full experiences. Tiffanie was the only one who voiced this kind of awareness of her friends as she wants to make a good impression on people. For her, this is a far more significant concern when she feels that she is not as skilled at an activity as she would like to be. Tiffanie's desires to please others, such as her teachers and parents, were noted in other contexts as well.

Articulated by all four girls, in different ways, was that liking physical activity does not necessarily mean liking PE. Olafson (2002) discusses similar findings that are largely due to the structure of PE classes. Within the traditional skill and sport-development approaches to physical activity in PE curriculum, girls may feel limited to certain ways of expressing themselves that are uncomfortable to them. Curricula like these often define female bodies as "weak, clumsy, and inept" (p. 69). The girls were able to provide specific examples of activities, which ranged from swimming with their friends to structured games of all-girls basketball, they liked doing. An explicitly stated reason all four girls gave for not enjoying PE was having to play with boys. All four girls expressed similar sentiments that reflect their co-ed experiences as those which make them feel "stupid," "awkward" and leave them "bored" because the boys do not let them play enough, if at all. These ideas support the literature advocating gender-segregated activities (Williams, Bedward, & Woodhouse, 2000). For these girls, girls-only sports and activities were said to be more enjoyable, because they felt they were able to participate more and were less likely to get hurt. They also suggested that participating with others of similar ability, which for them means girls-only, was a positive factor in their enjoyment in an activity. Perhaps revisiting some of the questions about feelings of self-consciousness in PE classes directly related to the boys would have prompted different responses. The girls consistently responded that they do not experience physical activity in a negative way until boys become part of the experience. Perhaps it is not the activities themselves that cause uneasiness and feelings of incompetence, as in some of the literature, but the addition of male peers that trigger these feelings.

Although the girls did not express disdain for competition or skill-based sport activity, they did not lead me to believe these were necessary criteria for the enjoyment of activity. The girls did not reproduce anxieties that are represented in the literature as feeling unable to do certain physical activities or that PE classes prompted nervousness (Oliver & Lalik, 2001; Tinning, 1985). These types of interpretations of the girls' experiences have implications for this project. Their descriptions of aspects of PE programs that produced enjoyable experiences are largely supportive of the literature and allow us to understand what makes activity fun for them. From the data we can see that the girls *wanted* to participate and enjoy being active. Factors limiting their participation, like co-ed activities where they are sidelined, contribute to unpleasant experiences, boredom, feelings of inadequacy or fear of injury.

Laney's perspective on her own future in Hip Hop dance is an example of how experiences of physical activity can converge with representations of social class. Her recognition that her dance experience is limited by her family's financial situation illustrates an explicit way that she is unable to pursue the activity of her choice in the way she would most like to do so. Her view of Carmen's position as a professional and her potential desire to do the same represents her experience of Hip Hop as a way to eventually generate income rather than just for fun. Laney's conception of Hip Hop illustrates the symbolic differentiation between the professional and the non-professional, as well as a connection between aspects of social class and individual access. Although economic access is a clear barrier to Laney's preferred means of participation in Hip Hop, it is not as clear a link for the other girls.

The activity of Hip Hop seemed to lend itself to meeting the girls' criteria for enjoyment of a physical activity. This is not to suggest that it was the activity of Hip Hop itself but a combination of Hip Hop and the environment. This environment included girls-only, had no uniform requirements, portrayed an attainable skill level expectation and provided opportunities for creativity. The habitus becomes implicated in the ways that teen girls choose the activities they want to participate in and their perceptions of what that experience may be like. Perhaps, because the Hip Hop program was community based and designed to be inclusive of economic diversity (as opposed to private and exclusive) it follows that this program would be regarded and experienced differently than one run out of a 'club' or 'studio.' Even at the level of the structure of the program, representations of class can be seen to be influential. From their past experiences in co-ed PE classes the girls have established perceptions of activities with boys as ones in which they will be restricted from participating. For girls like these, it is important to provide activity alternatives that allow them to participate fully in the ways that are most beneficial to them.

Bodily Experience

This research was devised to contribute to the understanding of teen girls' experiences of their bodies in a particular physical activity designed to facilitate fun and learning. This final section is the heart of this project and will contribute to literature about adolescent girls' experience of their bodies. From the literature that responds to the historical oppression and physical restraint imposed upon the female body by patriarchal social structures, this project wishes to broaden this perspective to include the bodies of teen girls as possible sites for new body perceptions through physical activity. The theory of the habitus is a powerful way to conceptualize the bodily experiences of teen girls, because it represents embodied inclinations to which the individual feels compelled, not chosen. When these girls described their experiences of their bodies in the Hip Hop program through notions of competence, freedom, expression and creativity, they are articulating an awareness of their bodies in ways that go beyond the visual or the skilled.

In many cases, a feminine existence restricts women to experience themselves as a body positioned in space where they are the objects of movements, rather than their originator (Young, 1990). A physically expressive, capable and empowered body rather than a beautiful one may be a new way to build confidence in one's self, one's abilities and one's sense that females have a right to occupy and move through a physical space. When girls and women see their bodies as their allies rather than their enemy, confidence in their daily physical movements may encourage a confidence to dismiss how others view these movements. Furthermore, if these activities are of a kind that result in kinesthetic pleasures, they are likely to be repeated, and bodily pleasures are transformed from the visual to the "feeling" body. The "feeling" body reconstitutes the experience of the female body as an object for the viewing pleasure of others to that of an experiencing, feeling and perceiving subject.

Unconcerned with how her body looked and unable to see her body, Ollivia's bodily experience was based on non-visual feedback. She felt as though no one was watching her and did not feel self-conscious as she danced. Moreover, there were no mirrors in which to see herself. From the notion that bodies are under constant surveillance as visual objects by the self and others, I offer the insight that Ollivia was able to escape this during the program sessions. The program was structured to promote creativity and individual interpretation of movement, and therefore, Ollivia was not expected to perform Hip Hop in a certain way that would be visually judged. There was not a single instance when her movements were judged as wrong or inexperienced. Through this program Ollivia was given the freedom to do Hip Hop in a way that felt good to her. The implications of this are encouraging to activity participants of all abilities. From the perspective of the beginner (like Ollivia), a positive experience of the untrained body may encourage them to stay involved and continue learning. For participants with more skill, this notion encourages them to continue and be creative and exploratory with movement. Overall, redefining the experience of the body as "feeling" offers an escape from the daily surveillance and discipline over the visual body. Reorganizing the way the body experiences physical activity also introduces and reaffirms a new body disposition to the habitus over time.

The notion of physical activity as a source of pleasure is missing from much of the literature regarding girls and physical activity. By dismissing pleasure of the body as something that originates from the outward appearance of the body, it might be reconstituted from within. To begin, the diversity of female experiences must be acknowledged, and diversity must encompass what individual women may find pleasurable. Through my analysis of the girls' experiences, their largest source of pleasure seemed to come from the feelings of freedom from their lives that the program enabled them to experience. This eight week program provided an environment that allowed the girls to leave the stresses that they encounter on a daily basis and experience feelings of freedom through physical activity.

The idea that the body can be reconstituted as a "feeling" body is a significant factor in the enjoyment of physical activity. The girls were able to disclose their sense of their bodies in this way and described their feelings of their bodies as relaxed, coordinated, in sync with the music and as happiness. Their explanation of this was an experience of their bodies in sync with the music, and feeling the beat of the music through their bodies like an energy. The dancing that Raye and Laney had already done provided them with an awareness of how dancing made them feel about themselves, while Tiffanie and Ollivia were forming their awareness through this program. The girls were encouraged to explore Hip Hop in new and different ways, ways that felt good to them.

Wright & Dewer (1997) explain the feelings that women have as they perform physical activities that they enjoy and how this provides them with a positive relationship with their body as a 'moving' or 'lived' body. I feel that important emphasis should be placed on the idea that a female can love the way her body feels, as a *feeling of connectedness,* without a notion of what it looks like. Wright & Dewer (1997) write "bodily pleasure in movement is expressed in the 'feeling'…the immediate sensory experience rather than for the instrumental purposes of weight control" (p. 89). This focus on the kinesthetic or sensual feelings of movement as pleasurable experiences for women, as opposed to visual reinforcement, can create feelings of empowerment through physical activity. The lack of mirrors may be an important element. Dance classes are commonly performed in front of mirrors, which provide immediate visual feedback and a constant way to compare oneself to others. Because the girls did not experience Hip Hop in a mirrored environment, their perceptions of their bodies are more limited to kinesthetic feelings. They may have practiced in front of mirrors at home or elsewhere, but for each program session they were able to work through the movements without a visual reminder of what they were doing. I think that this is a particularly valuable insight for beginners or for girls who are self-conscious of their moving bodies. Tiffanie was the only girl who mentioned noticing the lack of mirrors in the environment and concluded that their only purpose would be to help her know if she was doing things properly, but that this did not seem to be a concern in this program.

As the girls became aware of their accomplishments, took pride in their uniqueness and became comfortable with the movements of Hip Hop, they experienced pleasures within the program environment as feelings of competence. Some of the contributing factors to this were the ease with which the girls felt able to learn the movement, the encouragement they got from the instructor and the freedom to be themselves and perform Hip Hop in their own way.

From the girls' experiences in the Hip Hop program it can be seen how freedom of personal expression and positive reinforcement of their individuality in a non-judgmental and supportive environment has allowed these girls to be themselves and feel good about that self. Although this is an isolated program and experience, we can learn from the way these girls learned Hip Hop and how dance can be freeing from the constraints of everyday life. The most significant commonality that emerged from the data was the connection that the girls made between doing Hip Hop in this program and feeling good about themselves. By this I mean that each of the four girls was able to say to me without question or confusion that Hip Hop makes them feel good. It makes them feel good not just because it is fun, but because they can do Hip Hop in a way that they choose, for reasons that they choose. Through this program they were able to physically express themselves in their own way, while feeling safe and secure in their individual physicality. If experiences like this one can be continually provided for them, the girls may be able to generate habitual notions of their bodies that are positive and "feeling". To parlay these experiences into the more durable dispositions of the habitus requires that these types of experiences are rewarding and accessible.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

The goal of this project was to allow the voices of four teen girls to be heard as they articulated their bodily experiences in physical activity. Through this inquiry into the girls' experience of the Hip Hop program, I have contributed to the understanding of how a group of teen girls relate to their active bodies. Through the description, analysis and interpretation of our conversations, I have made specific conclusions and recommendations throughout the discussion. I have interpreted the experiences of Laney, Ollivia, Raye and Tiffanie, in the ways that they were able to communicate them to me, from a feminist perspective as they relate to the principles of Bourdieu's (1990b) body habitus. This project has undertaken an analysis of the gendered female body and focused on the ways the girls' experienced their female bodies. My discussion addressed how their bodies moved through the space around them and their comfort in doing so. All dispositions of the body were analysed as inseparable from the self, and so I felt it was important to speak to the ways the girls perceived themselves. From the data I became aware of the influence that Carmen had on the girls' experiences and how her leadership strategies accomplished her goals in a unique way. To fulfill the goal of this project I paid special attention to the ways in which the girls articulated their experiences of being active both with the parameters of PE and outside of them. Finally, I made my contribution to the understanding of the girls' bodily experiences within the specific context of the Hip Hop dance program. In this final chapter I will make a few additional conclusions about the project, but will focus on the recommendations this project can make to the literature and some questions this project has left unanswered.

Additional Conclusions

First, this research allows me to conclude that previous recommendations from the literature designed to help foster positive experiences for teen girls in physical activity are valid. Those specific recommendations are to incorporate fun, to provide opportunities for socialization, to offer a girls-only atmosphere and to provide positive role models in a safe and supportive environment. From this project I can further recommend that activities which are easy to learn, individually performed and allow creative potential and include music may contribute to the creation of positive experiences.

Second, providing quality physical activity experiences for teen girls that strive to engage girls in positive relationships with their bodies should consider focusing these types of programs on what I have termed "enjoyment without expertise." This concept pulls together all strategies discussed in the previous chapter as a central recommended goal. "Enjoyment without expertise" articulates the potential to experience enjoyment in an activity without necessarily having much training in it and includes the reality experienced by those who may be awkward, uncoordinated or clumsy. I think I can already hear a collection of voices saying "that's not new, that *has always been* my experience of physical activity!" I am not professing to have discovered something new here, but rather providing some evidence to support the notion that better is not always *best* for everyone. Our society sends us constant reminders that we can be better and we can do better. The messages that we do not commonly receive are those that encourage us to do something and experience it as an end in itself. In this way, participation in physical activity for the enjoyment of the experience can be a way to access the body habitus in new and positive ways. If the habitus can acquire inclinations towards physical activity without the stress of performance standards, goal attainment or visual body changes, perhaps one's dispositions towards activity can change over time.

My third conclusion is to suggest the value of programming that allows girls freedom from their everyday lives. My interpretations of freedom were practically experienced by the girls as feelings of release from the stresses in their daily lives, feelings of relief from judgement at home and in school and feelings of satisfaction in being themselves. As another gesture to the importance of leadership, these feelings can only develop in a non-authoritative environment. It also seems realistic to suggest that this type of environment is more likely to occur in programs that position physical activity as an experience to enjoy and as an end in itself.

My final insight is to recognize that this is not *the* alternative. I have not intended to create a dialogue that dismisses all other discourses or to position this above those others. This project wishes to address the wants and needs of a group of teen girls that are not heard by the dominant "patriarchal tradition" in physical education, sport and physical activity and offer an alternative.

Unanswered Questions

What this project found was that instruction can continually progress without all participants mastering every skill. In the Hip Hop program, girls were able to learn at their own pace and feel comfortable with their own progression and skill development without necessarily meeting the standards of others. A key feature of this activity in particular is that Hip Hop done "properly" can be done in a variety of ways. For an activity like this one, the motivation for participants to perform the activity in the same ways as other participants is minimal. Additionally, when the actions of one participant do not necessarily impact the development of others, this idea can be pursued. With the knowledge that this insight was gained from the experience of one individual, there are a few unanswered questions. I must now inquire into the effects of other possible influences, which has prompted me ask the following questions: first, what is the influence of participating in an activity with friends as opposed to total strangers? Second, what is the influence of the program location with regards to things such as: being visible to walk-by traffic (like in a busy recreation centre) and having parents remain on site and supervise? My third question asks if the acquisition of skills over time change the way individuals' experience physical activity and the ways they perceive their bodies. Finally, I'd like to inquire into the different means through which individuals understand their relative abilities and perceive their active bodies. These types of questions that speak to an individual's perceptions of their habitus as a body with certain abilities are certainly theoretically complex.

From this project, I also learned how the girls' perceived the time they spent in the Hip Hop program as an escape from the authorities present in their everyday lives. The previous set of questions can also apply to the continued investigation of how girls experience freedom through activity. Some additional ways that I would like to follow-up on these insights would be to answer the following questions: First, do these feelings of freedom change over time and in what ways? And second, can the notion of "feeling free" be practically experienced as freedom from the normalized body?

To keep the voices of adolescent girls at the forefront of investigations like these is essential. I must then conclude that the descriptions of their experiences and the stories of their lives, though interpretations, are valuable and accurate. The ultimate validation of research like this would be to communicate findings about girls to girls and discuss where the interpretations made by adults (like me) go wrong.

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Appendix A

Contact Summary Sheet: Group Interview #1- 45mins. March 25th, 2004

1- Key information about – The Group

- Pseudonyms chosen today: the girls will be known as - Raye, Laney, Ollivia, Tiffanie
- Girls are upbeat, chatty and friendly towards each other and myself
- Overall impression of the first interview is positive, allowed me an opportunity to get to know the girls better (and vice versa) / and develop a level of comfort between us

2- Summary of information on key themes:

Themes	Information
choosing images in magazines the girls like	choices vary widely / based on look, product in advertisement, favorite brand
meanings of clothing	largely stereotypical, although they talk about their personal choices with greater flexibility
free time	girls consistently talk about their relationships with their friends as the most important
PE /activity	speak positively about their experiences / no evidence that they (all) participate in extra-curricular activities regularly / indicate preference for gender-segregated activity
body image	responses were generally as follows: "I don't think about it much/ doesn't bother me"

3- Interesting, surprising or important evidence

- Girls (surprisingly) monitored themselves in terms of taking turns speaking, offering each other support during conversations about more sensitive topics
- Girls seem to really understand what it means to be "labeled" and how these behaviours can be hurtful and exclude people unfairly
- Girls helped me to set up the snacks etc., due to my limitations on crutches, I think this helps to remove my role as "researcher" a little bit.

4- Remaining Questions

- Need to explore their ideas about clothing choices and how these choices can be a way of expressing oneself. There is a contradiction here as when we talked about girls in the magazines we were quick to affix labels and judgements about certain clothing choices seemingly based on how we wear our own clothing. We are not giving others the same opportunities for individuality as we want (demand) for ourselves.
- Do the girls see themselves represented in the images in magazines and other media? If so, is this a version of themselves they'd like to be? Or realistically portray?
- What is the effect of the group on the girls' ability to express themselves honestly? Will responses change when the interviews are one-on-one?
- Being injured, more immobile, and vulnerable (me)– has this actually helped rapport?

Appendix A

Contact Summary Sheet: Group Interview #2 – 45mins. April 1st, 2004

1- **Key information about – The Group**

- girls were able to bring up a few thoughts they had about last week's conversation after thinking about it
- certain pictures triggered their memory, to complete thoughts from last week
- valuable process to complete two interviews to assess and confirm how the group uses words and the meanings they associate with things. I am able to do some member-checks here

2- **Summary of information on key themes:**

Themes	**Information**
finding representation in magazines	Raye is able to- Ollivia, Laney, Tiffanie do not in the magazines provided but provide insight
self-image	able to describe themselves, girls comment on each other / positive and negatively
hobbies	not structured for the most part, socializing becomes main theme here
parents	of varying influence and impose different levels of supervision, decision making
gender representation	categorize certain activities as more for girls or boys – stereotypical conceptions here / think that girls should be able to do whatever they want/ are good at

3- **Interesting, surprising or important evidence**

- Ollivia struggled the most of the girls with Hip Hop – she talks as though she is unaware that her skills are the least developed. I expected her to mention it in some way. She really and truly seemed to enjoy the experience and found it "easy"
- The amount the girls talked about this dance class as a place where they are able to get away from their everyday lives surprised me. For them it was a place to forget about how "stressed out" they are and can "be themselves"
- Clothing seemed to be a direct link for them to know how much money a girl has (access to)

4- **Remaining Questions**

- Questions for Raye around how she sees herself as a tomboy and model, are these things mutually exclusive? What are the pressures on her? Where do they come from?
- Interested in their ability to feel "free" when dancing. What are they free from?
- Investigate in greater detail how they relate to themselves when being active, do they feel comfortable trying new things? What kinds of things make them uncomfortable? Can they articulate how they "feel" when being active?
- Interested to know how they will describe Carmen
- They have all indicated they would like to continue taking Hip Hop classes like this one, what are the specific things about this experience that make them want to continue?
- Do they have any thoughts on how to make this program better? What would they change?

Appendix A

Contact Summary Sheet: Individual Interview with Raye – 105mins. April 5th 2004

1- **Key information about** – Raye (Age 15)

- characterizes herself as a skater, punk, talks about skipping class, detention
- recently attained a local modeling contract, says they want her to be something that she is not, loves the attention – wants to be famous
- attended each session, on time, respectful of Carmen's authority, talks about the girls that do not pay attention and distract the class as "disrespectful"
- strong association with what people wear and who they are

2- Summary of information on key themes:

Themes	Information
family	has responsibilities to look out for little sister / money is tight and her purchases are restricted to needs / sometimes makes her own accessories
image	an important part of her "self," takes time getting ready / choosing clothes that make her stand out from the crowd / describes self as - tough, different, judged, physical – fights, pressured to conform, someone with dreams
bodily experience	aggressive when playing sports in PE / likes lots of different activities from skateboarding to cheerleading (which would contradict her statements about disliking "girly" things- cheerleading as feminine practice)
Hip Hop as freedom	escape from life – parents, teachers, "the people who want me to be something I'm not" / feels understood in the class "I feel good here" / feelings of competence, able to do the things she wants to do

3- Interesting, surprising or important evidence

- Raye is simultaneously conforming to and rejecting the pressures put on her from her teachers, parents, and friends.
- Expresses disgust at others' disrespect in the H.H. class, but sees her own accumulation of detentions etc. (read – her disrespect of someone else's rules) as undeserved – her behaviour is obviously different in these contexts
- Talked about her boyfriend as being opposed to her cutting her hair short for a modeling job – she seems to value the opinions he had about her appearance, she didn't take the job
- Has a sense of how she fits/or doesn't fit into her world, and is able to talk about what that means in a larger sense

4- Remaining Questions

- Why is Raye's behaviour in the H.H. context so different from her expressed behaviour in school etc.?
- I would like another opportunity to talk to her about her view of her differing roles as a female (model, tomboy) we did not have enough time to fully develop these conversations.

Appendix A

Contact Summary Sheet: Individual Interview with Ollivia – 90 mins. April 6th 2004

1- Key information about – Ollivia (Age 13)

- expressed herself as someone who is wrongly associated with certain labels and thinks that the girls in her (school) classes can be really mean to people that they don't like (thinks this is wrong)
- talked about watching other girls in the H.H. class but was sure that they weren't watching her "it just doesn't feel like they're watching me"
- expressed her H.H. abilities as "about the same as everyone else's" – both Carmen and I agree, she struggled throughout the program to learn the steps *within this group she represents the ability to 'enjoy without expertise'*

2- Summary of information on key themes:

Themes	Information
family	spends a lot of free time with her little brother (parents are divorced) before and after school, no parental supervision after school
image	describes herself purely by physical descriptions despite numerous prompts, has trouble expressing more detail to me / talks about being interested in clothing and "her look" but also says her mom picks out her clothes and wears things that are "just comfortable, I don't really care" (contradiction)
hobbies	she spends a lot of time in online worlds like Yville/ Neopets she has jobs, relationships, shops etc. / has a hard time explaining what she does with her friends, "we just sit around and talk, and laugh…and I don't know"
bodily experience	feels good, likes learning H.H. and wants to continue / her descriptions are unique in that her reality of the situation does not match that of other people's

3- Interesting, surprising or important evidence

- Her positive experience in the H.H. program, her feelings of competence in doing the moves, and our (me/Carmen) agreement that she lacks skills comparatively. This is significant in comparison to the other girls, who have not expressed themselves with this proficiency.
- Ollivia contributed in the group sessions, but seemed more comfortable talking about more personal experiences without the group present

4- Remaining Questions

- A lot of Ollivia's answers to my questions were short and lacked description. I feel as though I worked with her to understand what she was trying to say, but feel as though I was sometimes unsuccessful. I am not able to know if this is a lack of sophistication in her sense of herself (age, experiences etc.) or due to shyness or feelings of discomfort with me. Both?
- Need to explore the idea – Can/how do you enjoy an activity, without necessarily being good at it? Would an environment with mirrors have changed this experience for the girls? This is a very interesting concept when looking to provide alternative opportunities for girls!

Appendix A

Contact Summary Sheet: Individual Interview with Tiffanie – 110mins. April 7th, 2004

1- **Key information about** – Tiffanie (Age 14)

- Throughout the program, she was willing and able to communicate with me about the things going on in her life and to describe her experiences in detail
- Her mom would always accompany her into the session and usually come over and chat with me about the research
- Describes herself as interested in many things, loves reading and immersing herself in the lives of her favorite characters and stories

2- **Summary of information on key themes:**

Themes	**Information**
family	describes her family as a strong influence in her life, spending a lot of time together and usually enjoying it
friends	repeatedly talked about the value she places on her friendships and the amount of time she wishes she could spend with them / feels as though she and her friends are inclusive of others, but talks about certain girls they don't want in their group
image	talks about the particular ways she gets ready, her emphasis on her hair and how she can't wait to be 16 and wear make-up (mom's rule) / thinks it is more than what people wear that allows others to impose judgements, but also "how" they wear it (i.e., attitude)
bodily experience	absolutely prefers girls-only physical activity – boys are too aggressive, fear of getting hurt, playing time becomes limited / sees H.H. as an opportunity to express her "tough" side with attitude / this experience is different from any other for her, it let her be creative with dance, "not like ballet" – less restrictive/technical

3 - Interesting, surprising or important evidence

- It is important to explore Tiffanie's statements about H.H. being a place where she can be someone that she is not in her everyday life.
- She is quite astute about the labels and perceptions we hold of each other, and is able to articulate why we think many of those things
- She is also quite worried about the perceptions others' hold of her, takes pride in doing things well, and likes "being popular"
- Of the group, she participates in the most gendered activities involving expressions of femininity

4- Remaining Questions

- Was being a different part of herself during H.H., freedom from the expectations she holds for herself, or freedom in the sense of enjoyment and release?
- How does she see her practices of femininity as expressions of herself? I would like to talk to her in greater depth about how she expresses the different parts of herself with her "look."

Appendix A

Contact Summary Sheet: Individual Interview with Laney – 100mins April 9th, 2004

1- Key information about – Laney (Age 15)

- A self-described "individual" Laney takes great pride in looking different, being understanding of difference, and "personal styles"
- Laney loves to dance, wants to keep dancing throughout her lifetime, talks about teaching dance herself one day, and loves performing. She finds it hard to follow her dream without being able to afford dance classes at a studio.

2- Summary of information on key themes:

Themes	Information
family	talks about a strong relationship with her mother and that she has to look out for herself a lot with her mom working so much
image	invests time and energy cultivating a "unique" look despite a lack of money- makes things, reuses things etc. / thinks that we can tell a lot about people from how they look, hopes people understand that she is not like everyone else / isn't as concerned about fitting in as she is to make a statement
friends	likes meeting new people, especially those with similar interests / her best friends are those who also love dance and together they make up new steps and dances
bodily experience	articulates her experiences in dance as inspiring her to do whatever she needs to do to make her dreams come true / dancing gives her energy / music gives her energy and she talks about different kinds of beats and rhythms as giving her "inspiration" to express her self through movement in different ways – emotions, feelings, etc.

3- Interesting, surprising or important evidence

- The physical feelings of H.H. and other kinds of dance have given her confidence to feel as though she is a capable person and able to achieve her goals
- She found freedom in the H.H. class specifically in the ways that she was allowed "to dance the way I want." She has found other types of dancing constraining in the ways that she had to perform the movements. She talks about liking all dancing, but especially H.H. as she can dance in the ways that feel good to her.
- She stood out from the group when she talked about performing. She spoke about dancing as a possible career and also in that she likes to perform for people and involve them in her "energy."

4- Remaining Questions

- Laney was my last interview and looking across the girls I would like to talk to them again about how they addressed feelings of freedom through Hip Hop dance in this program.
- I wonder if she would associate feelings of freedom with dancing if she had more opportunity to pursue dance through classes in a studio setting etc.?

Appendix A

Contact Summary Sheet: Individual Interview with Carmen- 120mins. April 23rd, 2004

1- Key information about – Carmen (Program Leader)

- Cheerful, energetic, spunky, tries to treat the girls with respect and not to take herself too seriously
- eager to convey to the girls her love of dancing, and the happiness that dancing can bring to you as a way to get away from the things that bring you down
- loves performing, teaching, giving back

2- Summary of information on key themes:

Themes	Information
Hip Hop as FUN	key to involving girls in H.H. over a long period of time is to make it fun and give them freedom to do things their way / alleviate pressure to do it how "the instructor" is doing it
being ONLY positive	avoiding correcting girls in this type of environment helps to get rid of judgements that other girls may have about ability / it's not always better to master each step, sometimes it's more valuable to keep on learning and figure it out as you go
mirrors	mirrors are a valuable teaching tool, but also a distraction, and a means for comparing yourself to others who you normally couldn't even see / allows you to look at everyone's bodies maybe
location	gymnasium too big, squash court too small, happy medium be ideal to have room but be a group as well
- teaching	rewarding to see girls "get it" and feel proud of themselves and their abilities, also to give girls new opportunities in a safe and supportive environment where they won't be judged or scolded / would like to start her own studio and give lessons to poorer girls – based on own limitations as a child coming from a family without a lot of money / philosophy is learning to love moving, in the ways you want to move, not in the ways that others tell you to. HH gives girls that freedom

3- Interesting, surprising or important evidence

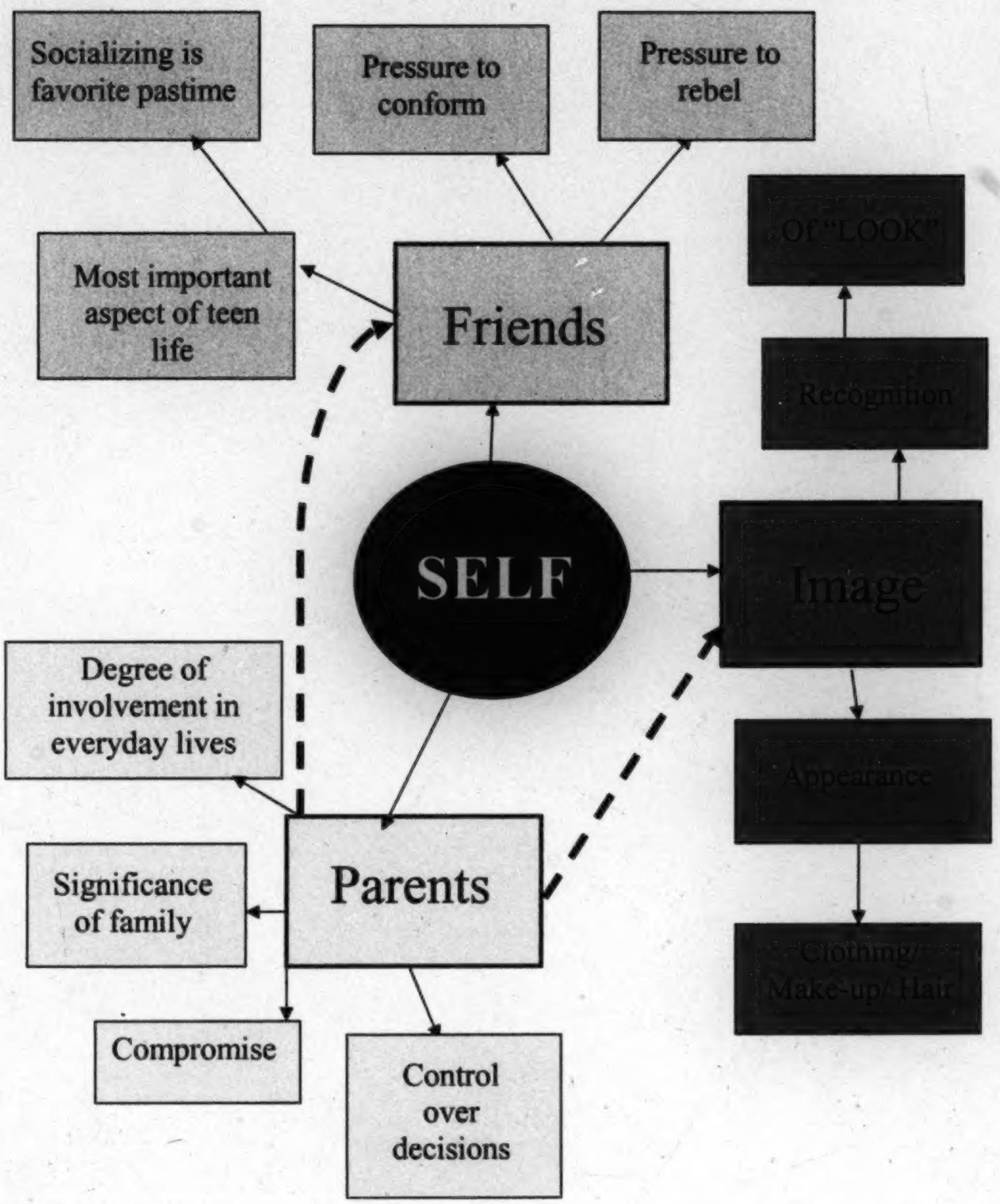
- She is keen to pass on some of the lessons she learnt over the years from the teachers in her life that she most admired, and who made the biggest difference in her life to get her to where she is today. She wants to give back.
- Wants to teach the girls to have confidence in themselves, and their abilities to be good at things in their own way
- Positive feedback in a dance class can translate into feeling good about yourself in other areas of your life. You never know when something you say will make a difference in someone else's life

4- Remaining Questions

- having spoken with Carmen at length and communicated with her throughout the program, I feel as though I have a good grasp of her intentions, philosophies, and views on the program

Appendix B

Data Display (Example)


Socializing is favorite pastime
Pressure to conform
Pressure to rebel
Of "LOOK"
Most important aspect of teen life
Friends
Recognition
SELF
Image
Degree of involvement in everyday lives
Appearance
Parents
Significance of family
Clothing/ Make-up/ Hair
Compromise
Control over decisions

Appendix C – Go Girl Agenda

Go Girl 2003

Get a slice of the action!

10:00 – 11:00am	Registration in Holy Trinity Gym												
	Spin Bike room 1st floor	Squash court 2 1st floor	Squash court 3 1st floor	Holy Trinity gym 2nd floor	Holy Trinity Café 2nd floor	Green Room 2nd floor	Conf. Room 2nd floor	Program room 3rd floor	Outdoor 1	Outdoor 2	Outdoor 3	Outdoor 4	Outdoor 5
11:00 – 11:50am	Spin Class	Pilates	Belly Dancing	Hip Hop	Break dancing				Rugby Golf	Sk8 boarding	Mtn Bike	Snow boarding	Rap-pelling
12:00-12:50pm	On the ball	Cup Stacking	Belly Dancing	Cheer - leading	Lacrosse			Break dancing	Golf	Sk8 boarding	Mtn Bike	Snow boarding	Rap-pelling
12:50-1:20pm	LUNCH – Holy Trinity Cafeteria												
1:30 – 2:20pm	Circuit training	Wally-ball	Wally-ball	Team Handball	Boot Camp	Power Yoga	Latin Dance	Stunt-nastics	Soccer	Sk8 boarding	Mtn Bike	Snow boarding	Rap-pelling
2:30 – 3:20pm	Circuit training	Skipping	Skipping	Uni hockey	Core Stabilizing	?	Latin Dance	Kick boxing	Ult. frisbee	Sk8 boarding	Mtn Bike	Snow boarding	Rap-pelling
3:30 – 4:00pm	Closing session – Holy trinity gym												

*Sessions are subject to change. Please indicate second or third choice if possible. Register early as sessions are limited. Rappelling sessions need waiver signed by parents.

Appendix D

Innovative Services Section – City of Edmonton – Values and Principles

Hip Hop Program - Underpinning Values and Principles (adapted from Parks and Recreation Ontario's High Five – "Our Commitment to Children")

Environments for participants must be:

- Secure, safe and stable
- Caring
- Stimulating
- Accessible
- Challenging
- Considerate of personal space and special needs
- Equipped with age, size and ability-appropriate equipment, furniture and materials
- Welcoming of diverse races, cultures and abilities

Activities for participants must:

- Allow for a combination of self-directed and staff/volunteer directed activities with plenty of choice
- Provide opportunities for input, involvement and choice
- Reflect both assessed and expressed needs
- Provide opportunities for active participation and reflection
- Encourage imaginative play, inquisitiveness, and thoughtfulness
- Provide leadership opportunities where possible
- Incorporate varied learning styles and developmental stages
- Value and incorporate cultural, racial and linguistic diversity
- Encourage cooperation and friendship
- Recognize uniqueness and encourage mastery

Leaders must:

- Ensure all participants are treated with respect, honesty and trust
- Recognize and accept individual needs and circumstances
- Employ positive behaviour management methods
- Help participants with values and celebrate diversity in the community
- Continually and consistently model appropriate behaviour
- Continually evaluate the program and their leadership to ensure improvements and reflect changing needs

Organizations must;

- Encourage and support the ongoing development of staff and volunteers with regard to their knowledge and understanding of healthy child development
- Ensure clear and on-going communication with parents and families
- Encourage participation and input from children and families
- Provide the organizational supports necessary to ensure that participants feel safe, welcome, competent, connected, empowered and special

Appendix E

Information Letter & Consent Form

Project Title: An Investigation into the Experiences of Teenage Girls' Participation in Alternative Physical Activity

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your daughter is invited to take part in a study directed by myself, Sue Lissel a Masters student in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta, under the supervision of assistant professor Dr. Lisa McDermott. The study is entitled "An investigation into the experiences of teenage girls' participation in alternative physical activity." This study has two purposes. The first aim is to learn about the experience of Hip Hop dance from the point of view of teenage girls. The second purpose is to understand what this experience means to them and how the girls view their bodies while doing Hip Hop dance. To date little research has been done looking at the experiences of teenage girls in physical activity outside of school physical education (PE). This study plans to explore how teen girls view their bodies while doing Hip Hop dance that has been designed to provide them with a fun, social, and healthy experience. Some of the kinds of questions I have for the girls include the following: What kind of issues do you think shape how girls your age think about their bodies? Can you describe to me how your body feels when you are doing Hip Hop? What did it feel like to move your body in that way?

All girls that sign up for the Hip Hop program will be given the chance to take part in this study. If your daughter should decide not to take part, her experience in the program will not be affected. The study will involve myself observing and talking with the girls during their time spent in the Hip Hop Program. These interactions will occur January through March 2004. There may be an extra 2-4 hour time commitment required of the girls outside of the program sessions if they choose to be involved in an individual and/or group interview. This additional time commitment will occur following the end of the program and will be kept as short as possible. The group interview will take place immediately following the last Hip Hop session. Interviews with individual girls will be set up for a mutually convenient time and location in the two week period following the end of the Hip Hop program. Five names of all consenting girls will be drawn out of a hat to be individually interviewed, while all consenting girls will take part in the group interview.

The information collected during the study will be in the form of notes written by myself after each Hip Hop session, as well as audiotape recordings of the interviews. Observations and interviews are considered to be research methods of minimal risk to participants. Examples of the types of discussion I will have with the girls include chatting with them about what they like/dislike about physical activity and why, what brought them to take part in the Hip Hop program, their experience of it, and how being physically active makes them feel about their bodies. I would also like to speak with the girls about their experiences in PE and other physical activities in which they may take part. Your daughter's right to refuse to answer any question will be fully respected at all